

# Proposed Revisions to GIRs Are Unveiled

Kelley Rivoire  
NEWS EDITOR

At a town meeting Wednesday, the MIT community heard a status report from the faculty task force on MIT's educational mission.

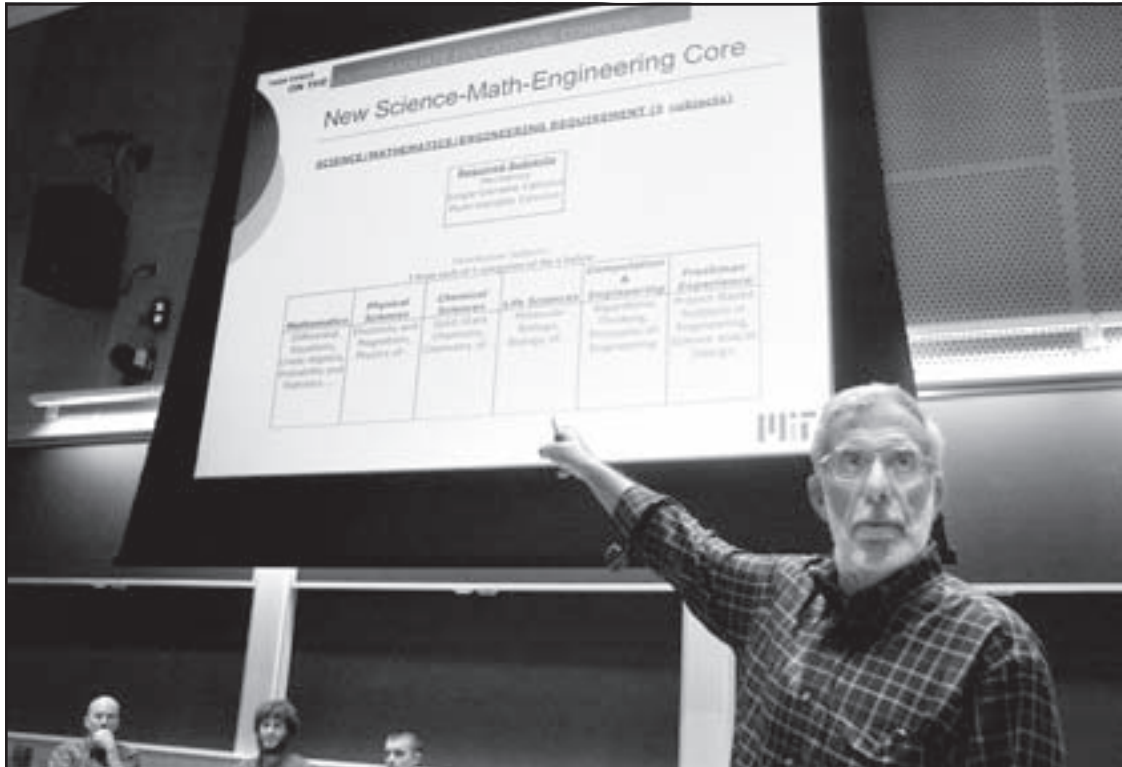
The committee proposed several tweaks to the General Institute Requirements, including eliminating the Institute Laboratory requirement. But the basic structure of the MIT-wide undergraduate requirements won't change much.

"Increasing freshman enthusiasm and motivation is an important goal," said Dean Robert J. Silbey, the committee's chairman.

"The freshman motivation and enthusiasm declines a lot from when they come in to Thanksgiving break," he said. "They come to MIT wanting to rule the world, change the world."

The committee's proposed changes, which are to be finalized this fall, will most significantly affect the current science core. Only Calculus I and II, along with Physics I, would remain as strict requirements, half the six mandatory subjects in the current science core.

In addition to these three subjects, the newly-christened "Science-Math-Engineering core" would require one subject from five of six categories: Math, Physical Sciences, Chemistry, Life Science, Computation and Engineering, and a project-based freshman experience, with the latter two making their first appearance in the core subjects. Each category would offer a few subjects from which freshmen



RICARDO RAMIREZ—THE TECH

**Dean of Science Robert J. Silbey introduces a plan for a new core curriculum that includes engineering. The task force charged with reevaluating the General Institute Requirements held a town meeting Wednesday afternoon in 32-123 to receive community input on proposed new requirements.**

could choose.

Additionally, the Institute laboratory currently required would be subsumed into departmental programs, as would restricted electives in science and technology.

The proposed changes to the

HASS requirement quite closely to the current model. The only major

departure to the eight-subject requirement would be a freshman experience class, selected from a range of about 10 to 16 classes, that would tackle a "big idea" like poverty, globalization,

human nature, revolutions, or even love, Silbey said.

Three pilot freshman experience HASS classes, such as "How to Stage a Revolution," in addition to six science and engineering project-based experiences, two of which are related to energy, are already under

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For a selected history of the GIRs and a diagram of the proposed changes to the GIRs, see page 15.

## Secretary Bodman Gives Views on Nuclear Energy

By Curt Fischer  
STAFF REPORTER

By the time secret service agents led U.S. Secretary of Energy Samuel W. Bodman ScD '65 into the Stata Center's Kirsch Auditorium on Tuesday, a packed house sat waiting to hear him speak about America's energy future. The talk was sponsored in part by the Energy Research Council and followed the release of the council's initial report last week.

In his talk and in the following question and answer session, Bodman, a former associate professor in chemical engineering at MIT, highlighted proposed federal budget increases to several energy research areas, including solar and wind energy, clean coal, and efficient hybrid vehicles, but the two topics that received the most atten-

tion were nuclear energy and cellulosic ethanol.

"We in this country need more nuclear energy," said Bodman. "I am convinced we will see new nuclear plants in our country," he said. "We don't need six new reactors, we need 16, we need 26, we need 46."

Another new nuclear thrust discussed by Bodman was Bush's new Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, an international effort to develop responsible management of nuclear waste through advanced reprocessing technology.

This technology relies on advanced burner reactors, which can use fast neutrons to consume and eliminate elements which are otherwise removed from today's reactors

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## Research VP Gast To Be Lehigh President

By Marie Y. Thibault  
NEWS EDITOR

Alice P. Gast, vice president for research and associate provost, will leave MIT and become the president of Lehigh University in Pennsylvania on Aug. 1, according to a news office press release.

Gast organizes research policy, copyright and patent licensing, and

oversees 18 research laboratories, the press release reported.

MIT President Susan Hockfield commented in the press release, her "leadership on issues relating to research policy and organization, faculty governance, and intellectual property, to name a few, is more than impressive, as is her ability to bring people with different interests

## Waitlisted Students Get in For First Time Since 2002

By Marissa Vogt  
NEWS EDITOR

For the first time in four years, MIT has admitted students to the incoming freshman class off of the waitlist. Thirty of the 320 students remaining on the waitlist were admitted this week, and the rest of the applications will be held for another week. Sixty-nine of the students originally placed on the waitlist had already withdrawn, according to an e-mail from Dean of Admissions Marilee Jones.

Of the 1,474 students originally admitted to the Class of 2010, 987, or 67 percent, have decided to enroll, Jones wrote in an e-mail. That percentage matched last year's recent-high yield of 67 percent for the Class of 2009, when the admissions office decided not to admit anyone off of the waitlist. Higher-than-expected yields in the past few years and MIT's pledge to eliminate crowding in dormitories have prevented MIT from admitting waitlisted students since 2002.

"We purposely calculated high so we'd go to the waitlist," wrote Jones in an e-mail. Thirteen percent of the applicants for admission to the Class of 2010 were admitted, smaller than the Class of 2009 in terms of both the number of admits and the acceptance rate. Jones did not say what the target size for the Class of 2010 had been.

"It is a happy day when we can admit waitlist students," Jones wrote. "Because we're able to admit just 13 percent of this stellar applicant pool, there are so many wonderful students we really want to admit on the waitlist. Some of the staff have developed relationships with some of those students and we were all very, very happy to admit them."

Jones said that she expects about 90 percent of the waitlisted admits will matriculate. Most of the students still on the waitlist "are ready to come on the spot," she wrote in an e-mail. "It's tough because within the past two weeks they had to tell another school they'd be enrolling and some of their hearts will be torn a bit." As a result, MIT tried to let students know as soon as possible if they would be accepted off the waitlist, she said.

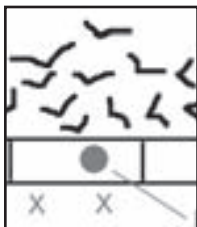
together around a common agenda. All of these qualities will serve her — and the university — very well as Lehigh's next president."

Gast said that "It is a tremendous honor to be asked to serve Lehigh University as its next president. I am extremely excited about the trajectory and momentum of this university," according to the press release.



CHRISTINA S. KANG

**Heather A. Levites '08 brings the first act to a close with "WhatChu Know About That," choreographed by Christina Huang '06. MIT Dancetroupe's spring show, "Guilty Pleasures," runs until this Sunday in Little Kresge Auditorium. See page 12 for additional photos.**



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WORLD & NATION

Influence Inquiry Turns Toward House Panel

By David Johnston and John M. Broder

THE NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON

Federal investigators are examining the activities of several members of the House Appropriations Committee, including Rep. Jerry Lewis, R-Calif., chairman of the panel that wields broad influence over government spending, government officials said Thursday.

The officials said the inquiry is focused on the relationships among lobbyists, contractors and committee members who seem to steer lucrative government contracts to favored vendors virtually free of outside oversight through a process known as earmarking.

The officials, who had been briefed on the investigation, were granted anonymity so that they could speak more candidly about a case that remains under federal investigation. They cautioned that the inquiry is preliminary and has not yet established specific evidence of wrongdoing by Lewis or by others. The officials declined to identify any other lawmakers under scrutiny.

Lewis, whose involvement in the inquiry was first reported by The Los Angeles Times on Thursday, issued a denial of any wrongdoing in which he said he had adhered to strict ethical standards in all his decisions on the committee. He said he knew nothing about the inquiry.

Colombia High Court Eases Nation's Ban on Abortion

By Juan Forero

THE NEW YORK TIMES

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA

Colombia's highest court has legalized abortion under certain limited circumstances. The decision is expected to embolden women's rights groups across Latin America to use courts in their countries to try to roll back some of the world's most stringent abortion laws.

In a 5-3 decision handed down late Wednesday, the Constitutional Court overturned Colombia's complete ban on abortion and ruled that the procedure would be permitted when the life of a mother was in danger or the fetus was expected to die or in cases of rape or incest. Women's rights organizations in places as varied as Argentina and New York, where several groups that closely tracked the case are based, hailed the ruling.

"This is a triumph for Colombian and Latin American women," said Monica Roa, a lawyer in Bogota who brought the suit on the grounds that by banning abortion, Colombia was violating its own commitments to international human rights treaties ensuring a woman's right to life and health.

Broader Use of DNA Lists Could Solve Crimes

By Nicholas Wade

THE NEW YORK TIMES

A team of Harvard scientists is proposing that DNA databases contain enough information so that criminals whose DNA has not been catalogued could be identified through their kinship to people already listed. They say this could be done by a method developed to identify victims of the World Trade Center attacks and other disasters.

The FBI's DNA database can now be searched only for exact matches to DNA found at crime scenes. But with slight modifications, it could be searched for close relatives of whoever left the DNA.

"Genetic surveillance would thus shift from the individual to the family," the scientists, Frederick R. Bieber and David Lazer, say in an article in Friday's issue of Science.

Kinship-based DNA searching is already used in Britain but has not become routine in the United States.

Such searches might be valuable in generating leads, Bieber said, because 46 percent of prisoners said they had close relatives who either were or had been incarcerated, a Department of Justice survey found in 1996.

Senate Agrees to Extension Of Tax Cuts, Mostly For Rich

By Edmund L. Andrews

THE NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON

The Senate voted 54-44 on Thursday to pass almost \$70 billion in tax cuts, mostly for the nation's wealthiest taxpayers. The action ensures that virtually all of President Bush's tax cuts will be locked in place until after the next presidential election.

The measure, which the House passed on Wednesday, would extend Bush's tax cuts on stock dividends and capital gains until 2010, and shield about 15 million affluent families for one year from an increase in the Alternative Minimum Tax.

The vote was a significant victory for Bush and beleaguered Republican leaders, who had viewed the tax cuts on stock market profits as a defining party issue and had credited them with jump-starting economic growth and reducing unemployment over the last three years.

"We're finally here; we have a deal," Sen. Charles E. Grassley of Iowa, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, declared with evident relief on the Senate floor. "More importantly, the American taxpayer has a deal. A deal that is long overdue."

But even as Senate Republicans celebrated, they failed to reach agreement with House Republicans on scores of other popular tax breaks, including tax deductions for college tuition and a savings credit for low-income people that expired last year.

Democrats charged that the tax bill focused almost entirely on cuts for wealthy investors and that it allowed programs aimed at ordinary citizens to languish.

"There is little in this bill to be proud of," said Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont. "Working people have been left behind."

House Republicans, meanwhile, remained in disarray over a budget plan for next year. After voting earlier Thursday to vote on the plan, which was to have been passed on April 15, House leaders postponed the vote after failing to reach agreement with Republican moderates who wanted \$3 billion more for health and education.

Even if House Republicans pass a budget plan later this month, their measure will have little practical importance because it probably will not be reconciled with a very different plan passed earlier this year by the

Senate.

The tax bill, which Bush is expected to sign as early as Friday, could set the stage for budgetary heartburn in the years ahead.

Virtually all of President Bush's tax cuts — rate reductions for individuals, a bigger child tax credit, the elimination of estate taxes and the tax cuts for stock dividends — will expire simultaneously at the end of 2010.

Renewing all those tax cuts at the same time would cost hundreds of billions of dollars a year, posing excruciating budget choices for the next president as the nation's baby boomers become eligible for billions of dollars in Medicare and Social Security benefits.

In addition, lawmakers merely postponed dealing with huge problems surrounding the Alternative Minimum Tax, a parallel tax that was originally aimed at millionaires but is not adjusted for inflation and is set to engulf millions of middle-class families.

Preventing an expansion of the alternative tax in 2007 would cost more than \$40 billion, and the costs increase each year after that.

Bush Defends NSA After Report That it Collected Phone Records

By Eric Lichtblau and Scott Shane

THE NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON

Congressional Republicans and Democrats alike demanded answers from the Bush administration on Thursday about a report that the National Security Agency has collected records of millions of domestic phone calls, even as President Bush assured Americans that their privacy is "fiercely protected."

"We're not mining or trolling through the personal lives of millions of innocent Americans," Bush said before leaving for a commencement address in Mississippi. "Our efforts are focused on links to al-Qaida and their known affiliates."

The president sought to defuse a tempest on Capitol Hill over an article in USA Today reporting that AT&T, Verizon and BellSouth have turned

over tens of millions of customer phone records to the NSA since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. But Bush's remarks appeared to do little to mollify members of Congress, as several leading lawmakers said they wanted to hear directly from administration officials and telecommunication executives.

The USA Today report could not be independently confirmed, and some former intelligence officials questioned the accuracy of some details.

But neither Bush nor any other administration figure explicitly denied the account, which suggested that the NSA's surveillance and data-mining operations in the United States go further than previously acknowledged and rekindled the controversy about domestic spying.

Several lawmakers predicted the new disclosures would complicate confirmation hearings next week for

Gen. Michael V. Hayden, formerly the head of the NSA, as the president's nominee to lead the Central Intelligence Agency.

The New York Times first reported in December, a week after its initial disclosure that the president had authorized the NSA to conduct eavesdropping without warrants, that the agency had gained the cooperation of American telecommunications companies to get access to records of vast amounts of domestic and international phone calls and e-mail messages. The agency analyzes communications patterns, the report said, and looks for evidence of terrorist activity at home and abroad.

The USA Today article on Thursday went further, saying that the NSA had created an enormous database of all calls made by customers of the three phone companies in an effort to compile a log of "every call ever made" within this country.

WEATHER

It Could Be Worse

By Scott Stransky

Yes, we are stuck in a pattern that will add plenty of grayness and rain to our lives over the next week or so, just as we begin to study for final exams.

Yes, today's high will be 10 degrees F (5°C) lower than the average high for this date. Yes, five years ago today it was 88°F (31°C) here. But it could be much worse. The United States has seen a number of extreme weather events over the past few days.

There have been tornadoes in seven southern states, hail in ten southern states, wind damage in nine states, snow in Colorado, and severe flooding in Missouri. Some of the hail in Richland Parish, Louisiana was reported to be nearly 3 inches (about 8 cm) in diameter. Yesterday, the National Weather Service issued a tornado watch for three Midwestern states, fire weather advisories in Florida, flood watches and warnings in 13 states, high wind advisories in nine states, and a winter weather advisory in the Western Plains. Yet, there were no watches or warnings issued for Massachusetts.

Hopefully, putting our rain and grayness into perspective will make you feel better. Towards the end of next week, we may see the sun again!

Extended Forecast

**Today:** Cloudy and some rain likely. High 52°F (11°C).

**Tonight:** Cloudy and some rain likely. Low 49°F (9°C).

**Saturday:** Cloudy and some rain likely. High low 50s °F (11°C).

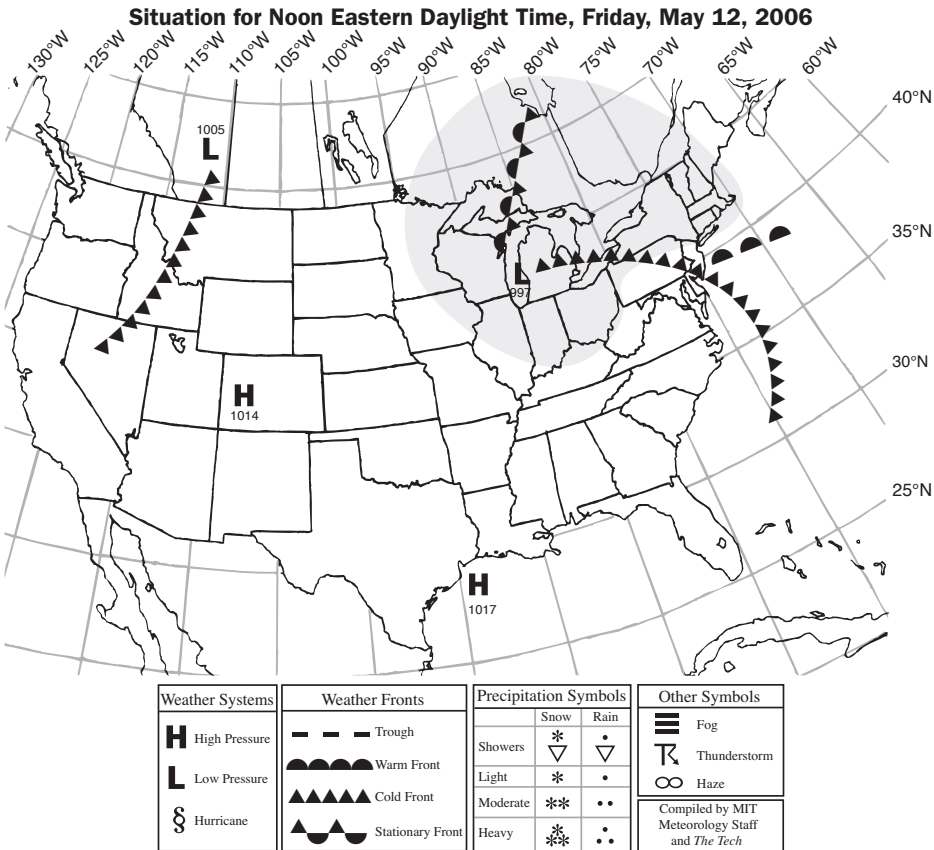
**Saturday Night:** Surprise! Cloudy and some rain likely. Low mid 40s °F (7°C).

**Sunday:** Cloudy and some rain likely. High mid 50s °F (13°C).

**Sunday Night:** Cloudy and some rain likely. Low mid 40s °F (7°C).

**Monday:** Cloudy and some rain likely. High near 60 °F (15°C).

**Monday Night:** Sunny ... just kidding, cloudy and some rain likely. Low mid 40s °F (7°C).





# France Gets Closer to Creating Copyright Law on Digital Music

By Thomas Crampton  
*THE NEW YORK TIMES*

PARIS  
Resisting pressure from business, French lawmakers have moved the country a step closer to a copyright law that would have wide-ranging effects on those selling or listening to digital music.

The Senate passed the bill on Wednesday after amending it to address concerns from companies like Apple that had called it “state-sponsored piracy.”

The Senate version of what is being called the iPod bill softens some measures that could have forced Apple to open all music sold from its iTunes Music Store to play on portable devices other than the Apple iPod.

The change is the crucial difference from the version passed in March by the National Assembly.

The National Assembly’s version permitted consumers to ask a court to force companies like Apple to let songs bought from iTunes play on other portable devices. The Senate version would accept such appeals only from companies.

The bill would guarantee that

tunes could play on multiple devices in a way that preserves some copy protection and respects rights established when the work was purchased. The real-world application of all this to companies like Apple and Sony will come out of committee actions.

The latest vote comes amid global debate over patents and copyrights in a world where instant Internet distribution of perfect digital copies is being blamed for disrupting conventional media business models. “France has adopted an entirely new and unique approach to managing digital music and films that could be a model for other countries to follow,” said Jonathan Arber, an analyst in London at Ovum, a consulting firm. “Everyone will be watching the impact six months down the line to see whether consumers or companies have benefited.”

Government officials said differences between the versions of the bill would be worked out in the next few weeks, with the law taking force within several months.

Both versions reduce penalties for piracy to the equivalent of a traffic offense; require software makers to give the government details of the

inner workings of their programs; and create an agency to rule on important digital copyright issues.

That agency will decide how many times a consumer can copy digital music files for personal use and, in the Senate version, will ensure that music bought from one online service can be played on any device.

“We have nothing to add at this point,” Alan Hely, a spokesman for Apple in Europe, said in an e-mail message, “as the discussions and voting continues” until May 30.

Vivendi Universal and Time Warner joined Apple in lobbying against the bill. The government championed the law as a way of encouraging innovation in Internet distribution models and the diversity of offerings.

The law will set France apart from many Western countries, especially the United States, in its positions on copyright law, digital copying and piracy, several critics said.

“This law risks removing all deterrence against piracy,” said Olivia Regnier, who represents record labels as the European regional counsel for the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry.

# Joint Edict Will Require Muslim Donations to Palestinian Authority

By Hassan M. Fattah  
*THE NEW YORK TIMES*

DOHA, QATAR  
Religious leaders from a number of Muslim countries issued a joint edict from here on Thursday requiring Muslims to donate money to the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, currently boycotted as a terrorist group by the United States and the European Union.

The high-profile entry of the religious leaders fuels rising popular pressure on Arab governments to break the boycott and seeks to turn a political issue into a pan-Islamic one.

By issuing a fatwa, or binding legal ruling, the scholars, who hold sway over a wide swath of the Muslim world, appear to have raised the stakes over the Palestinian Authority’s financial crisis.

“This meeting has reverted the Palestinian issue to its rightful depth as an Arab, and Islamic issue,” said Izat Reshq, a member of Hamas’ politburo. “We in Hamas always said this is not just an internal Palestinian issue, it is an Arab and Muslim one.”

Prominent clerics like the Egyptian Sheik Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the

Saudi cleric Salman al-Odeh and Sheik Harith al-Dhari, head of Iraq’s Sunni Islamic Scholars Association, met with leaders of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in closed-door sessions here over the past two days to discuss various steps of breaking the embargo on the Hamas-led government. The clerics drew up an action plan to support the Palestinians and wrote an edict calling on Muslims to donate money and allay the financial crisis in areas under Palestinian security or administrative control and, in effect, resist the United States and Europe.

There were no representatives from Fatah, the more secular Palestinian movement that led the Palestinian Authority until it was ousted in January’s elections.

“God instructed the men of religion to stand up for justice and keep the Muslim nation aware,” said Professor Ahmad Ali al-Iman, a Sudanese cleric who attended the sessions. “Palestine is a religious issue, not just a political one, and affects all Muslims. So we want the Muslim nation to stand as one with the Palestinians.”

The site of the meeting produced

some odd juxtapositions. Doha is home to the U.S. army’s Central Command and served as the operations center for the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. It is also home to the satellite station Al-Jazeera.

Conservative and radical Muslim scholars debated ways out of the crisis, with Khaled Meshal, a Damascus-based leader of Hamas, at one point openly calling on Arab governments to supply Hamas with arms, even as American soldiers, some in uniform, held meetings in nearby rooms.

The meeting occurred as Islamist and social movements throughout the Arab world began collecting millions in support of the Palestinians in recent days.

Governments, too, have pledged support. Last month, Iran pledged \$50 million to the Palestinian Authority, and Qatar and Saudi Arabia soon followed suit, pledging \$50 million and \$90 million respectively.

It was not immediately clear, however, how Muslim donations would actually get to Palestinians as American pressure continued on Arab banks not to transfer funds into Palestinian hands.

# Plans to Patent AIDS Drug Provoke Legal Fight in India Over Higher Cost

By Amelia Gentleman and Hari Kumar  
*THE NEW YORK TIMES*

NEW DELHI  
AIDS groups this week brought an important test of India’s new patent law, which restricts the ability of Indian companies to produce low-cost generic drugs.

Two patients-rights groups sued to stop Gilead Sciences, a California biopharmaceutical company, from patenting the anti-retroviral drug Viread — the company’s brand-name version of tenofovir, which is available here as a generic drug, from being granted a patent. If it is patented, the groups contend, making the cheaper versions will become illegal, and the drug will become too expensive for patients here and in other developing countries.

The patent law, enacted in March to bring India in line with World Trade Organization rules, frustrates some companies in the country’s large pharmaceutical industry, which makes copies of many Western medicines. International organizations providing medical aid and advocates

for patients fear that the law could cut off their access to affordable generic drugs.

The Indian patent office is processing about 9,000 applications, most for drugs made by big international pharmaceutical companies.

“These generic drugs are not only consumed in India,” said Leena Menghaney of Doctors Without Borders in New Delhi, which is working with the Indian groups on the issue. “People in Africa and the Caribbean are relying on India to produce these drugs. The quality matches that of U.S.-manufactured drugs, but the prices are affordable.”

The immediate challenge came when the Delhi Network of Positive People and the Indian Network for People Living with HIV/AIDS formally registered opposition to a patent application by Gilead Sciences for tenofovir.

The lawyers for the groups made their case on Tuesday, contending that tenofovir is not a new drug, but a modified version of an earlier drug, and therefore not eligible for a new patent under India’s new law.

Those backing the legal challenge are hoping to gain a legal precedent for use in other patent applications. They say the recent rejection of a patent application by Novartis for a cancer drug, Gleevac, on the grounds of similar legal arguments gave some cause for optimism.

The World Health Organization recently recommended tenofovir for patients who are just starting treatment for AIDS and for those who have been receiving antiretroviral treatment therapy for some time but who have become resistant to other treatments.

In developed countries, Gilead’s tenofovir costs \$5,718 per patient per year. Cipla, one of the largest generic companies in India, is marketing a version called Tenvir, at a cost of \$700 per person per year in India. Yusuf Hamied, chairman of Cipla, said the drug would eventually be made available in Africa for about half that price.

But Tenvir would have to be withdrawn if Gilead were given a patent, which would be in effect for 12 years.

## Police Beat Crowds Backing Egypt’s Judges

THE NEW YORK TIMES

CAIRO, EGYPT

President Hosni Mubarak’s government dispatched thousands of riot police officers into the center of the city on Thursday to silence demonstrators intent on showing support for judges demanding independence from the president.

The police clubbed men and women trying to demonstrate as well as half a dozen journalists.

“This is a farce in every meaning of the word,” said Salah Zidan, a lawyer involved in pressing for more freedoms. “There has never been anything like this: that someone should express his opinion is committing a crime.”

The police also blocked streets and subway stations, disrupting the lives of thousands of people who live and work in the area. Officers sealed off the Judges Club, a stately building that has become a kind of headquarters for people calling for more democracy.

“I am just trying to go to work,” said Fatma Shoeib, a lawyer who could not get to her office because of the police blockade. “But we are witnessing a farce. We are in a police state; this cannot be a state of law.”

## Universal Music Settles Big Payola Case

By Jeff Leeds

THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Universal Music Group, the world’s biggest music company, has agreed to pay \$12 million to settle accusations that executives paid radio programmers to play songs, according to a settlement announced Thursday. It is the largest such settlement yet in an investigation by the New York attorney general that has shaken the music business.

The office of the attorney general, Eliot Spitzer, said in documents released Thursday that Universal, a unit of Vivendi, had used a broad array of illegal “pay-for-play” tactics to secure airplay for its music, including bribing programmers with laptop computers, tickets to sporting events and luxury hotel stays.

Spitzer’s office has been examining whether the four corporations that dominate the music industry have violated federal or New York state laws that prohibit payments of cash or anything of value to radio programmers for airplay unless the transaction is disclosed to listeners.

Last year, the authorities settled with Warner Music Group for \$5 million and Sony BMG Music Entertainment for \$10 million in similar arrangements. In March, Spitzer sued one of the nation’s biggest radio broadcasters, Entercom Communications, accusing it of trading airplay for money, after settlement discussions faltered.

In an interview, Spitzer said the “uniformity” of record executives’ conduct, reflected in e-mail messages and other documents uncovered in earlier settlements, “speaks to the understanding in the industry that radio play is the best way to motivate sales, and folks would do what needed to be done to get the airtime.”

## Governor of Kentucky is Indicted

By Ian Urbina

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Gov. Ernie Fletcher of Kentucky, a Republican, was indicted Thursday on charges that he illegally rewarded political supporters with state jobs.

Fletcher, who is charged with three misdemeanors of criminal conspiracy, official misconduct and violating the prohibition against political discrimination, has denied any wrongdoing and has accused the state’s attorney general, Gregory D. Stumbo, a Democrat, of being politically motivated in his investigation.

The indictment is the culmination of a yearlong investigation that began after a whistleblower provided paperwork to the attorney general, who accused Fletcher of violating civil-service hiring laws by filling rank-and-file state jobs based on political leanings of applicants rather than their merit. The governor could face up to 12 months in prison and \$500 in fines.

“This has been a politically motivated, media-driven investigation from the start,” Fletcher said in a statement. “Because of the politicization of this entire investigation, we are filing a motion at this time to disqualify Greg Stumbo and his entire office from further participation in this matter.”

## Shiite Cleric Closes Mosques To Honor Killing of Sunnis

By Sabrina Tavernise

THE NEW YORK TIMES

BAGHDAD, IRAQ

In a move to try to ease sectarian violence, Iraq’s most senior Shiite cleric on Thursday ordered all Shiite mosques closed in a southern town after a Sunni Arab cleric and two bodyguards were shot dead there.

Thursday was also the deadliest day for the U.S. military in a month, with the deaths of seven service members and the announcement of an eighth death that occurred Tuesday.

The mosque closings, ordered by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, were for Zubayr, a town about 12 miles south of Basra, and were to remain in effect for Friday prayer services and Saturday. It was a gesture of condolence to Sunni Arabs after gunmen killed a Sunni cleric, Sheik Khaled al-Sadoun, and two of his guards as they left a mosque in the town just after evening prayers on Wednesday.

Al-Sistani, who commands a broad following among Shiites in Iraq and throughout the region, has repeatedly called for Shiites to refrain from revenge attacks after suicide bombings and other killings.

In Zubayr, al-Sistani was trying to command his followers to condemn a killing carried out against Sunnis, something that Sunni leaders are not always quick to do for Shiites.

“The order came from his eminence to close the Shiite mosques to deplore the aggression and the security chaos in the province,” said Sheik Mohammed Falak, al-Sistani’s representative. “Sistani demanded the Shiite and the Sunnis to be as far from dispute as possible.”

“The Basra community lives in pain and the security forces stand helpless in front of the assassinations that reach Sunnis and Shiites,” he said.



# OPINION

## Letters To The Editor

### 8.022 Lecture Format No Problem

In your May 9 news article “Striking a Balance In TEAL: Whether To Learn Or In-

spire” concerning student dissatisfaction with the 8.02 TEAL classes, Professor Peter Dourmashkin states that students frustrated with the Electricity & Magnetism materials tend to displace their frustrations on the TEAL format.

As a student in Professor Gabriella Sciol-la’s 8.022 class, I would like to point out that, although I have been quite frustrated at times with the course material, I have never felt frus-trated with the course’s lecture format.

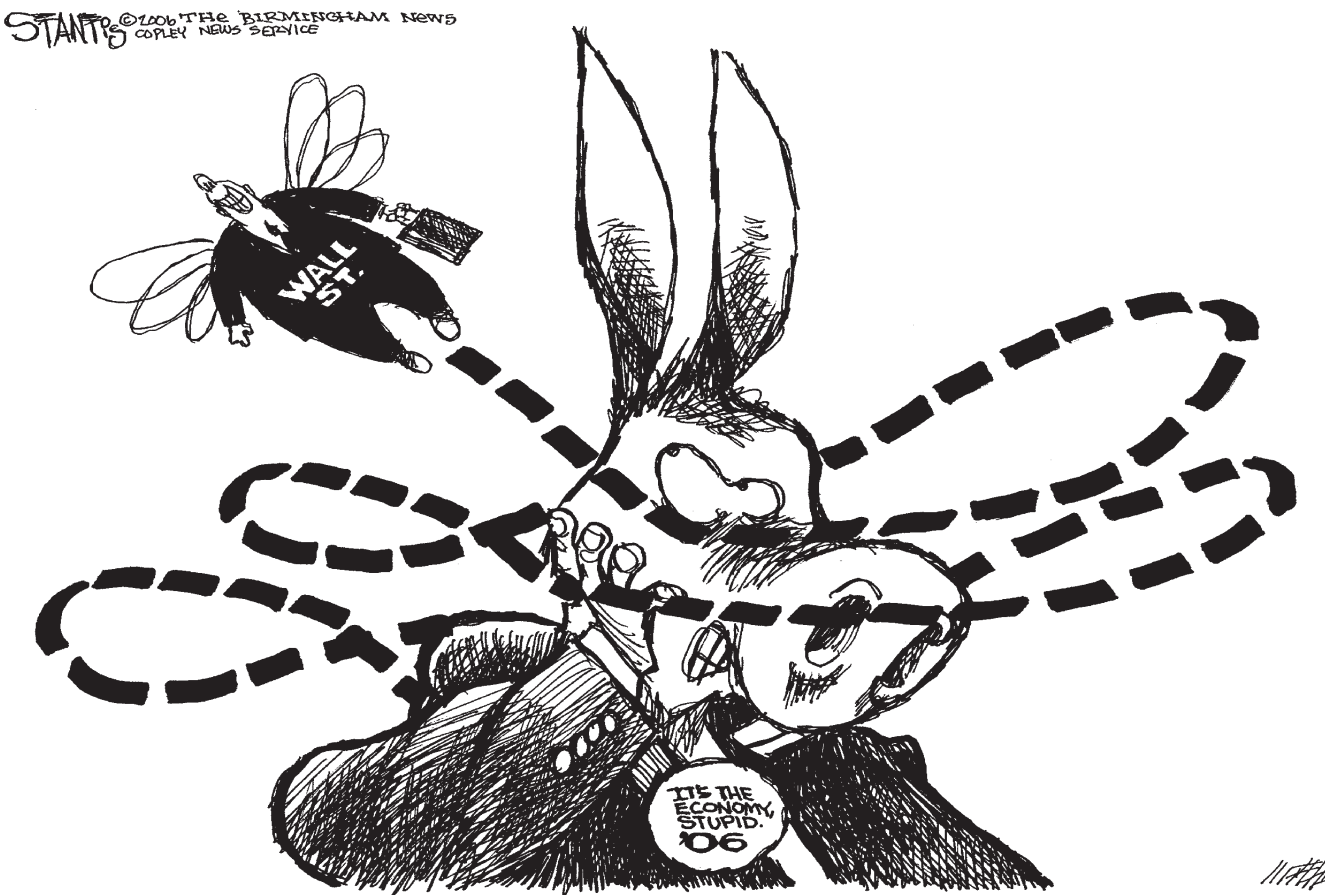
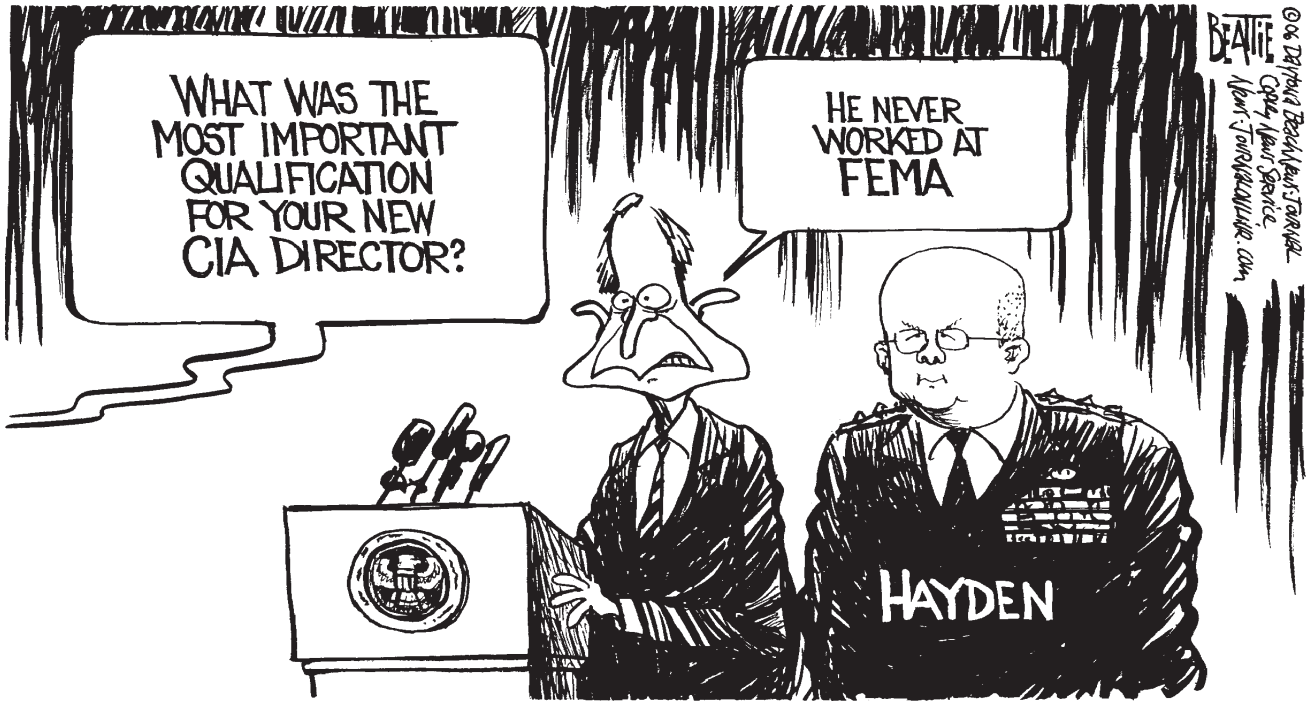
Matthew W. Petersen '09

### Corrections

The page 10 table of new Undergraduate Association officers in the Monday, May 9 issue were not students elected, as indicated, but approved by the UA Senate after being nominated by UA President-elect Andrew T. Lukmann '07.

A May 5 page 14 caption about the Big Jimmy mural misidentified Sotero “BG183” Ortiz as Davide “Nosm” Perre.

The May 9 news article “Community, Energy Priorities for Hockfield Addressing UA Senate, President Focuses on Community Within, Beyond Undergrad Living Groups” re-ported incorrectly that the MIT Energy Forum took place on Tuesday, when in fact it was held on Wednesday, May 3.



### Opinion Policy

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# Free the UA From Financial Dependence

Hans E. Anderson

Perennial dissatisfaction with the Undergraduate Association centers on concern about its legitimacy, as evident in the lack of support, understanding or appreciation for its work among its constituents.

What are the factors undermining UA legitimacy?

First, low voter turnout. Although the recent presidential election might suggest otherwise, turnout is usually directly correlated to the number of platforms.

Second, inaction and ineptitude among officials, who have often run unopposed to win their positions, lending weight to the perception of lack of legitimacy.

And third, the inability of the UA to address what should be its highest priority: to stop the trend among MIT administrators to act first and seek student opinion later (if at all).

One way to counter these UA shortcomings is to increase the UA's independence.

Low voter turnout tends to become a downward spiral. Lack of legitimacy drives disillusionment, which cuts the participation at the polls, which then further decreases the legitimacy of the newly elected body. It is an unfortunate cycle that can only be addressed by trying to improve the appeal of the UA in other ways, for example by improving diversity of the candidates.

The problem goes deeper; because of the perception that the UA tends to draw resumé builders rather than those committed to serving the student body, otherwise genuinely interested people may expect it to be a low-responsibility title and act accordingly. Fortunately, resumé builders are not the dominant contingent among UA members.

Unfortunately for those genuinely committed to effective student government, the power of the UA as a body is limited, perhaps because those in power are too concerned with limiting abuses of power to allow its justifiable exercise.

While individual senators have successfully brought positive changes to facilities and procedures at MIT, such activities build the popularity of the person who leads the project, while marginalizing the role of the UA as a whole. If the UA's job is to give people a title to use when they champion pet projects, we have succeeded. If it is to systematically improve the way the administration interfaces with students, then we have much distance to go.

This distance is compounded by the minimal power vested in the UA Senate. The Senate can do three things: regulate itself, fund groups, and write resolutions. The first two are exercised the most often and most effectively. The third is less common, but it is what *makes* the Senate a senate and not a self-regulating funding board. However, these resolutions are used only sparingly against undesirable administrative measures. The primary

argument for this restraint is that continual use would drive down the potency of all resolutions. However, this reasoning is flawed; it takes far too long to build potency, and during that time many unfavorable policies could be enacted. The Senate is unjustified in restraining its voice, even if administrators fail to react.

The principle behind the lack of resolutions against unpopular measures may be due to the close ties between the administration and the UA. The vast majority of UA funding is filtered through the administration. Students have no leverage against the administration when their government's existence depends on administrative largesse. The only obvious check to administrative decisions is a potentially negative impact on admissions applications. As it stands, the UA is a giant lobbying organization operationally tied to the group it is lobbying.

There are reasons for the dependence on the administration. The institutional memory of the UA is limited by a four-year rollover at best (assuming fall elections). Administrative involvement is crucial to prevent embezzlement from entering the financial system, and thus, financial duties are performed by external parties. As long as its members cannot be trusted, the UA cannot balance its own checkbook.

The creation of an *Independent UA* would address issues of both undue financial dependence and lack of legitimacy. The new UA would control its own finances from an account outside of MIT, generated from additional revenue gathering measures, supplementing contributions from the student life fee. No longer tied to the administration to operate, the UA could better meet them as equals. To prevent the embezzlement problem, the said account could be jointly run by a board such that withdrawals would require the consent of a majority.

An argument that might be made against this program is that MIT could then divert the student life fee to other purposes that are not in the best interests of the students. This is a problem, but to what extent? Any such inappropriate measure would hopefully cause enough outcry among the student population to prevent its passage. But as time has shown, institutional memory is quite short; students may not notice if they only redirect funds *slowly* from the UA to something else. Additionally, administrators may argue that the external account replaces student life funding; we must make it clear that on the contrary, it is designed to augment it.

As things now stand, the UA is inherently dependent on the MIT administration, and will remain so either until it starts collecting fees directly from students, or finds another means to achieve self-solvency.

*Hans E. Anderson '08 was the 2005-2006 Undergraduate Association Senate Representative to the Finance Board, and is the incoming UA Chair of the Finance Board.*

*As it stands, the UA is a giant lobbying organization operationally tied to the group it is lobbying.*

# A Skeptical View Of the Macrocommunity

Ali S. Wyne

Undergraduate Association (UA) elections having recently concluded, and now is an appropriate time to outline the UA's priorities for the upcoming year. There are several issues that I could reasonably discuss, but a treatment of the term "macrocommunity" seems the most appropriate.

First, what is its definition? Does the achievement of a macrocommunity entail the intermingling of groups from different residences? Of different religious faiths? Of different ethnicities? Of different majors? Of different extracurricular activities? Without any consensus on what macrocommunity means, it would be imprudent to attempt to construct one. That being said, however, proponents of a macrocommunity generally define it as a union of students from different dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and independent living groups.

It is likely that any endeavor to achieve such a group would either (1) compromise the diversity of its members, or (2) perhaps even further polarize students on campus, if they objected to such an artificial arrangement. In addition to being undesirable, then, constructing a macrocommunity is unnecessary, for while there is a tendency to associate one personality or culture with a given residence, each living community in actuality comprises myriad vibrant cultures. In any given living group, some floors are far more social than others, or house more ethnic or exchange students. There are also floors on which certain elements of social experience (for example, religious faith, cooking, and intramural sports) play a central role in bringing students together. Why, then, should we argue for a macrocommunity when micro communities afford their residents such richness of experience?

Although there are some individuals who enjoy venturing out of their "comfort zones" and socializing with individuals whom they perceive to be different from themselves, human instinct compels most of us to associate with those whom we regard as similar to ourselves. We should certainly commend individuals who take the initiative to explore social groups other than their own, but we would be remiss to look down upon those who follow their natural tendencies.

Having disavowed the notion of a macrocommunity, however, I must confess my belief that some of the supposed barriers between different residential groups are contrived. During orientation, my tour guides gave me the impression that there was quite literally a Berlin Wall of sorts that divided East Campus and West Campus, and that it was unheard of for a member of one to

minge with those from the other. Whatever experiences I have accrued in my two years here at MIT suggest that East and West Campus residents socialize all the time, not just at large-scale events such as Beast Roast or Steer Roast. I know many dormitory row people in Courses 6 and 18 who routinely visit Bexley, Random, East Campus, and Senior House, and vice versa, to work on projects. The Student Center, furthermore, serves as a focal point of interaction, as it houses most of MIT's extracurricular organizations. These two examples (among others) illuminate a broader point: "Don't fix it if it ain't broke." Natural interaction between different social groups on campus is already robust. Forcing further socialization would accordingly be counterproductive.

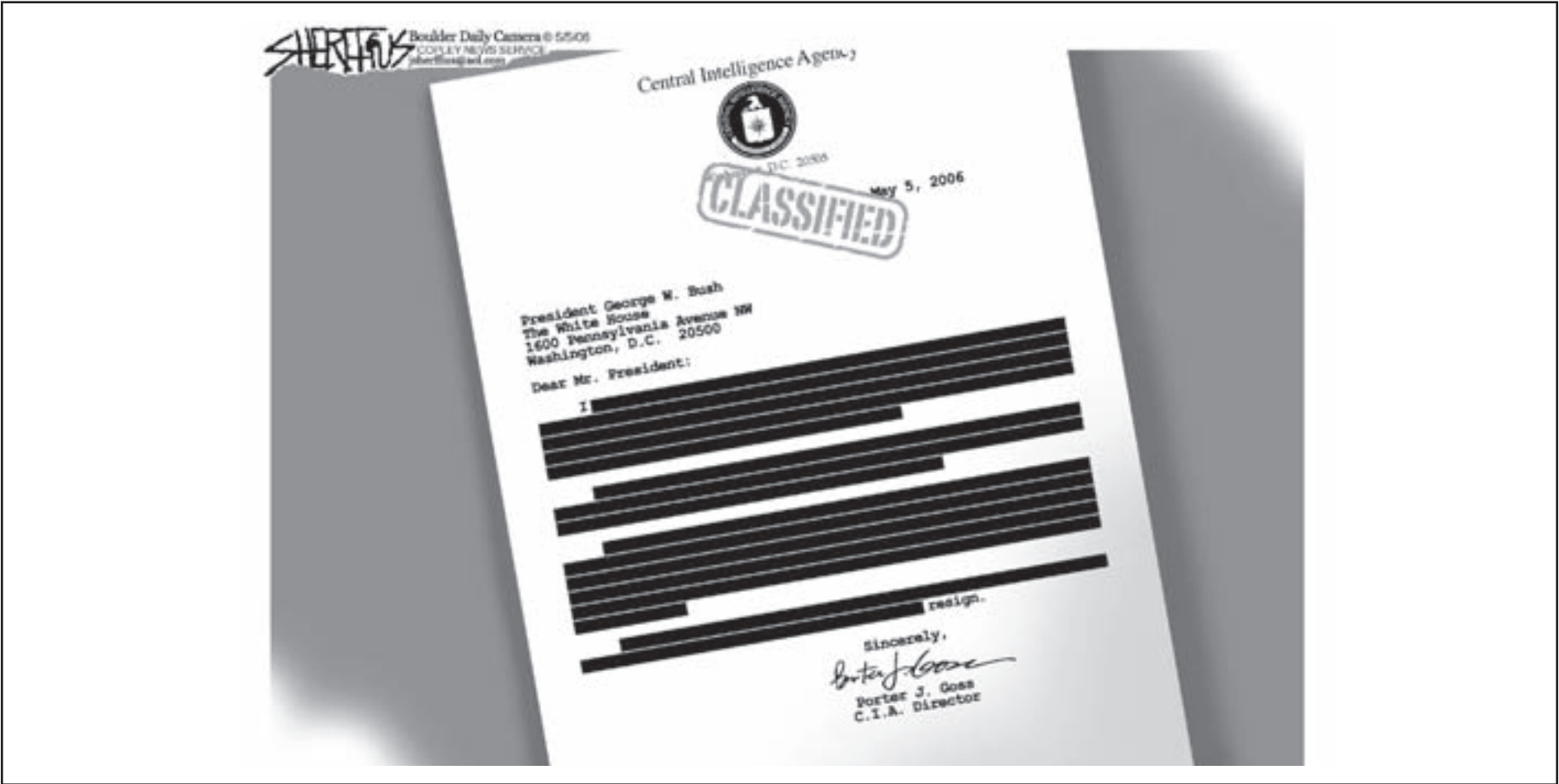
I admit, however, that when I came here as a freshman, I readily (and naively, I should add) endorsed all proposals to "unite" the two sides of campus. Although an East – West mixer might sound like a simple way to achieve this objective, it would simply reinforce the perceived gap between them and, accordingly, further their separation. As a member of various committees, I went to East Campus and Senior House and asked the residents to suggest ideas for bridging campus divides. Their recommendations could reasonably be distilled to: (1) host more events that appeal to particular residences or constituencies and (2) implement policies that benefit a broad segment of the student body.

Rather than guess or presume to know what various constituencies' needs and preferred events are, as the UA sometimes has in the past, this year we intend to proactively learn about them. To this end, we will host some regular meetings, as well as several "town hall" sessions, at various living groups throughout the year.

With this thought in mind, the UA's central priority for the upcoming year should be to improve its communication with members of the student body. This sort of statement has become clichéd by now, and invariably arouses cynicism in many quarters, but it should not be regarded as a secondary priority. As a member of the UA, while I have addressed a number of campus issues, I acknowledge that there are instances in which I could have better communicated with my constituents. I take full responsibility for those mistakes, and will work to rectify them, especially when issues of wide concern (in recent memory, the decision to modify the space in Lobby 10 of the Infinite Corridor) are involved. More continuous and substantive communication is the clearest way to make all students feel comfortable in their micro communities, which we should value above all else.

*Ali S. Wyne is the UA Senate Vice Chair.*

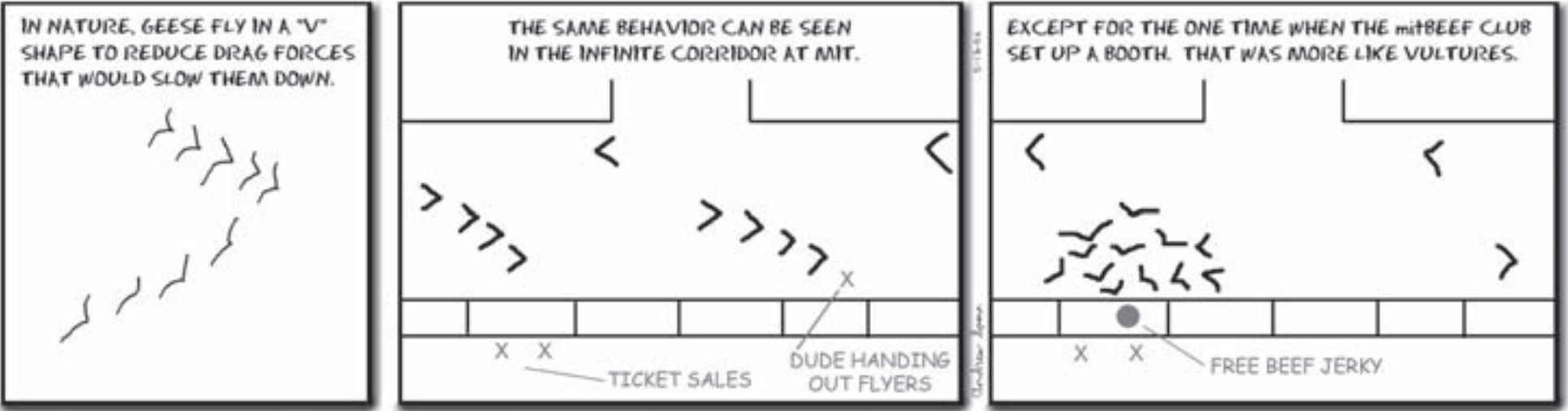
*Natural interaction between different social groups on campus is already robust. Forcing further socialization would accordingly be counterproductive.*





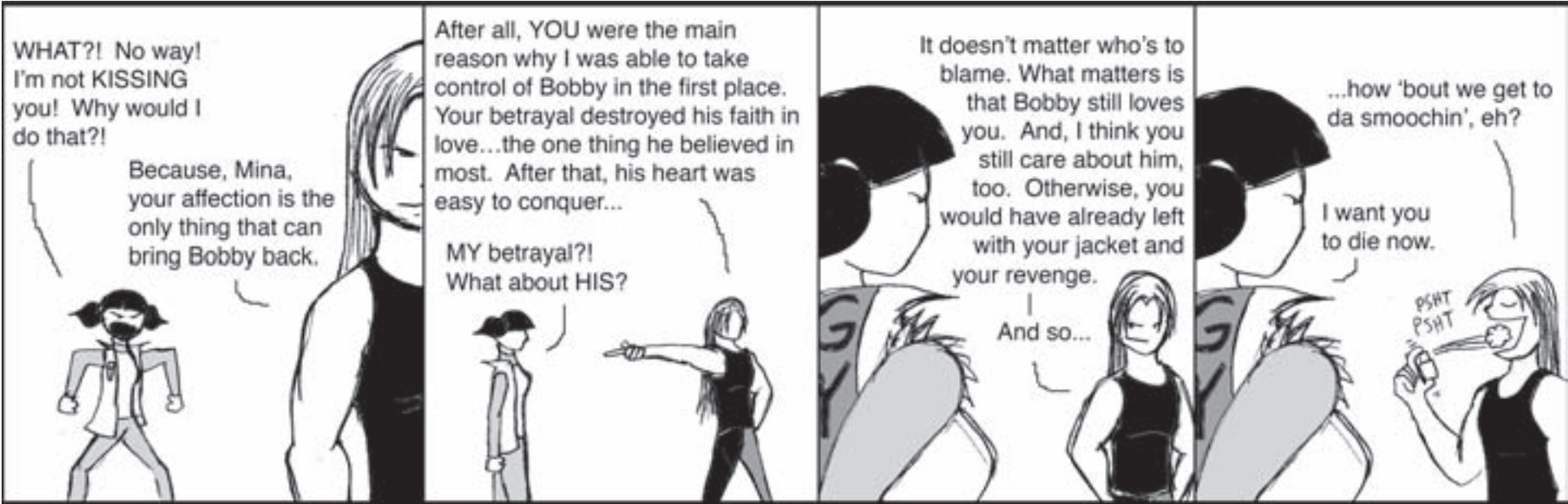
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Trio

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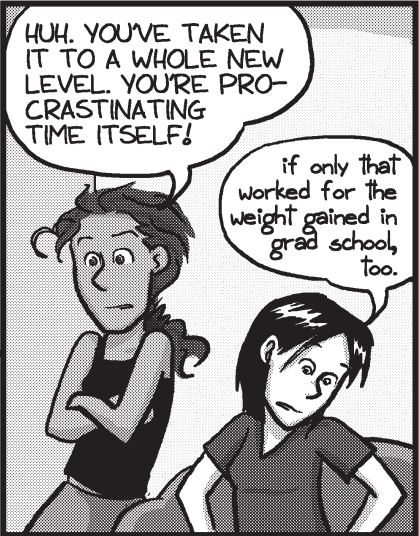
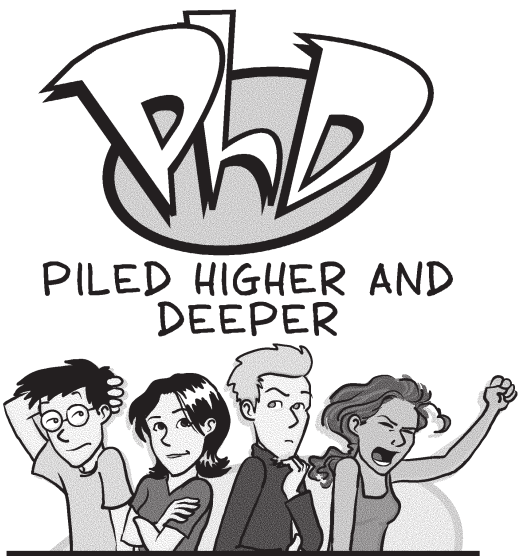


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Crossword Puzzle

Solution, page 13

TECHNIQUE

Pick up...

...Pre-ordered

Buy...

...\$50

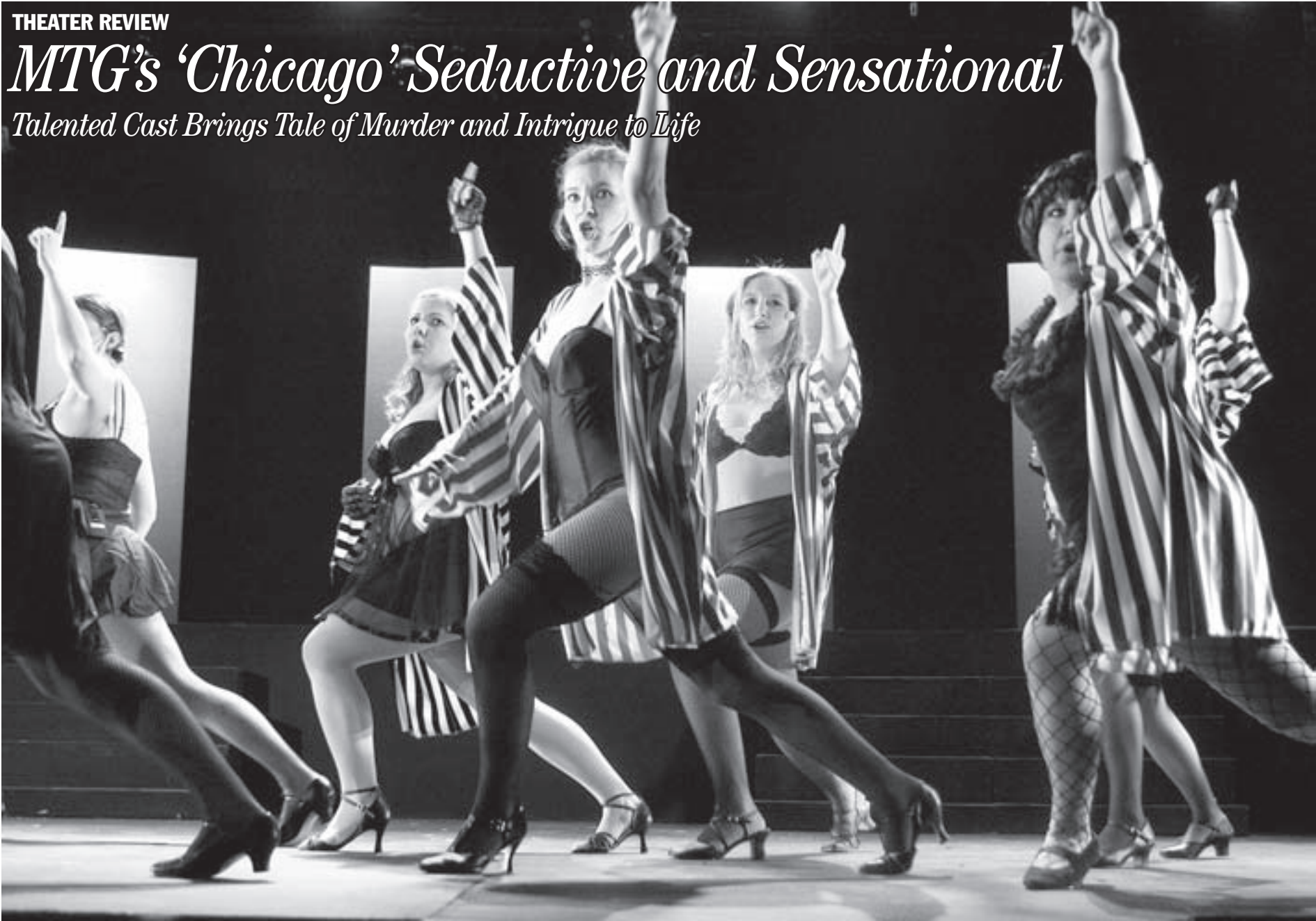
May 12 & 15-18...

...Lobby 10

2006 Year Book



ARTS



**The Merry Murderesses (Krista Sergi, Amelia Thomas, Eleanor M. Pritchard '06, Kelsey E. Contreras of Wellesley '06, Dawn M. Erickson '07, Nicolina A. Akrahoff '07) of the Cook County jail perform the "Cell Block Tango."**

**By Robert Morrison**  
*Chicago*  
Julie Kang G and Cristina A. Thomas G, producers  
Danbee Kim '09, director  
April 28-30, May 4-6, 2006  
Kresge Little Theatre

There is a dark, bare stage with four lighted doorways in front of a full house. A cell phone/flash photography announcement appears, and then we are transported back to the roaring 1920's and the era of nightclubs. The show begins with a stylish Emcee introduction (Estevan M. Martinez '08), followed by "All that Jazz." This ensemble piece is led by Velma Kelly (Eleanor M. Pritchard '06) to the subdued (at least for now) rhythms of Isaac Brody and his orchestra behind the stage. So begins a fine evening at MTG's "Chicago."

Across the stage, the acting fits the bill. Eloisa M. De Castro '07 is excellent as Roxie Hart, the spotlight-hogging bombshell whose trip through the penal system is the main story line. She sparkles in her solos, plays coy to get her way, and flashes anger when she doesn't get what she wants. Matthew A. Ciborowski '08 is veritably the smooth operator, Billy Flynn, who's always in control. Pritchard embodies the ever-changing persona of Velma Kelly. She is harsh to Roxy in their first encounter, later attempts reconciliation (but is rebutted), and finally garners sympathy when supplanted from the murderess' row spotlight.

The audience sympathizes with Gregory J. Lohman G's Amos Hart, Roxie's painfully honest and boring husband. Thom Dancy, who plays Mary Sunshine, accentuates the idealistic sweetness of her job as a reporter (and is a well set-up surprise in the trial). Momma, the prison warden, is cheerfully played by Patricia M. Fogerson '07, but then again, she's raking in her money assisting these popular murderesses. The host of murderesses and ensemble all fill their roles seamlessly and with spunk.

The stage direction (courtesy of Danbee Kim '09 as mentored by Stephen L. Peters G) is fluid, moving from act to act, revealing the plot smoothly as it jumps between nightclub acts. Of special note is the trial opening tour deforce, "Razzle Dazzle." Strangely enough, as good as the song is, the jury steals the scene.

The choreography (by Diana T. Lusk '08 and captained by Amelia H. Thomas) has pizzazz and flare, befitting both the setting and the

action. In particular, the "Cell Block Tango" makes excellent use of the tableau, and is effectually punctuated by lighting (Sean Glass) to keep everything sharp and vivid. The lighting also does its job in the rest of the show. The costumes (by Nori Pritchard '06 assisted by Steven L. Flowers '06) are outstanding, from

seductive negligees, to pink dancing outfits for a fan dance, and of course, the sharp clothes Billy Flynn changes into and out of on stage. They make the night club numbers stand out as real spectacles.

The costume and set changes all went smoothly the night I saw the show. The court

room came together fluidly in the midst of a lot of action onstage. Roxy disappeared after one number, and was back on stage in a different dress for the next. The actors wore microphones so everything could be heard, but the quality was natural and blended well with the music.



**Roxie Hart (Eloisa M. de Castro '07), with the assistance of Billy Flynn (Matthew A. Ciborowski '08, obscured), reenacts her crime as reporters (from left to right, Dawn M. Erickson '07, Nicolina A. Akrahoff '07, Edmund Golaski '99, and Sally E. Peach '09) look on.**





Counterclockwise from above:  
Roxie Hart (Eloisa M. de Castro '07) tries to make a deal with lawyer Billy Flynn (Matthew A. Ciborowski '08).  
Roxie Hart (Eloisa M. De Castro '07) sings about "Me and My Baby" while surrounded by doctors and nurses (from left to right, J. Michael Spencer, Matt Maranda, Carlos Cardenas '09, Edmund Golaski '99).  
Velma Kelly (Eleanor M. Pritchard '06) schemes to win the jurors' hearts when she takes the witness stand.  
Billy Flynn (Matthew A Ciborowski '08) and his chorus in "All I Care About is Love."  
*Photography by Wan Yusof Wan Morshidi*





## CONCERT REVIEW

# Spring Weekend Caters to 'Alternative' Tastes

## Strong Performances Marred by Rude Concertgoers



DAVID TEMPLETON—THE TECH

**Cake frontman John McCrea gestures towards trumpet player Vince DiFiore.****By Minyoung Jang**

STAFF WRITER

*Spring Weekend Concert**Cake with Josh Cole and the Household, Matt Pond PA**Johnson Athletic Center**Friday, April 28, 2006**7:45 p.m.*

**W**hat do you get when you have a few vocalists, guitarists, bassists, drummers, and, oh, a trumpet player and a cellist around?

MIT's Spring Weekend concert, of course.

With Cake headlining this year's concert, and Matt Pond PA and Josh Cole and the Household as the openers, concert organizers succeeded in catering to the "alternative" crowd.

I have to confess that I only caught the tail end of Josh Cole's set, but I was impressed by what little I heard. Cole's voice reminded me a little bit of Dan Bern, but it was thankfully less sharp and nasal. Altogether, the band put on a tight performance with a rich sound.

Unfortunately — and I say this with especial regret, because I really like these guys

— Matt Pond PA did not quite live up to my expectations. They were not bad by any means, but their live performance lacked the iridescence and the almost orchestral feel found in their recordings.

What I enjoy most about Matt Pond PA's music is that all the parts, be it vocal or cello, blend together beautifully to form a full sound. There's always a flurry of activity in the treble, however, that gives a sense of intricacy to each song. In their live performance, however, the parts sounded too distinct. Although I didn't hear any major flaws in each individual part, at times the performance sounded like five different solos playing at the same time.

Singer John McCrea said Cake was "here to serve you tonight" in a deadpan voice and almost militaristic style. Opening with the laid-back but dark sounding "Frank Sinatra," followed by "Comfort Eagle," the band added to this tongue-in-cheek vibe of being counterculture revolutionaries. Cake's performance fell flat at times, but only because I find a lot of their songs to be weak in the first place.

I'd be remiss at this point if I didn't mention that Cake's trumpet player is, for lack of a better description, totally awesome. The bright

and brassy contrast of the trumpet line was sometimes the only thing that kept Cake from suffocating on its own poker-faced style of facetiousness.

Cake performed songs in a variety of styles. They veered into a more dance-friend-

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*I'd be remiss at this point if I didn't mention that Cake's trumpet player is, for lack of a better description, totally awesome.*

---

ly, sunny mood with "Wheels," "Love You Madly," and "Ruby Sees All." The set also included well-known hits, such as "Stickshifts and Safetybelts" and "No Phone" — during which McCrea encouraged a guys vs. girls competition in yelling out "no phone, no phone." Perhaps somewhat ironically, a good portion of the crowd waved cell phones in lieu of lighters just few songs later during "Mexico," a ballad in a relaxed 3/4 time

signature. According to Cake, this was their rebellion against the abundance of 4/4 songs on the airwaves.

Despite the great performances, I have to say that the concert ended on a bitter note. Out of the many concerts I've attended, ranging from Jewel to the Kaiser Chiefs, I have never crossed paths with as many rude audience members. Starting from the beginning of Cake's set, some people blatantly leaned into my space to attempt to get a better view, and throughout the night, a couple of students repeatedly cut through the crowd to move up front.

By far the worst part of this entire scenario, however, was the fact that concert organizers didn't do anything about it. I understand that it's difficult to get into the middle of the crowd to warn people or kick them out, but I've seen it happen to crowd surfers at previous MIT concerts, so it's definitely not a new concept. Concert organizers had no official comment when I e-mailed them after the concert.

So, I give props to Josh Cole, Matt Pond PA, and Cake for putting on a pretty good concert, and would like to extend a plea for better etiquette at the next Spring Weekend.

## CD REVIEW

# Starr Shines with Soulful Voice

## Emotive Fifth Album Highlights a Style All Her Own

**By Jillian Berry**

ASSOCIATE ARTS EDITOR

*The Sound of You and Me**Garrison Starr**Vanguard Records**Released March 13, 2006*

**H**ave you ever heard a song that just makes you want to cry and you don't know why? If after having shed those tears, you feel a great relief, you'll know what I mean when I say that Garrison Starr's fifth album, "The Sound of You & Me," is an hour-long version of one of those songs.

Starr was born in Mississippi, moved to Los Angeles for a few years, and now resides in Memphis. "Sound" is unique, with pop, folk, country, blues, and bluegrass inspirations blending to form eleven moving songs. Her distinctive voice can be at once pure and intensely soulful, or mature and raspy. I could try to compare her sound to that of some other musician, but I think she is the only one of her kind.

When I first listened to the CD, the songs blended together, and I was afraid none were very memorable. Once I listened again, how-

ever, I realized just how distinct most of the songs really are. I am not sure how her songs can be so similar yet so different at the same time, but she has obviously found her voice.

The CD starts with "Pendulum," which begins, "Pendulum / Are you lonely on the run?" As with this song, much of the record explores the loneliness of life and the pains of past loves.

While most songs center on this theme, a few stand out. In "Sing It Like A Victim," she sings "tighten up your jar / let the tears roll down from your eyes" and think about all the hurt that someone has caused so that you can move forward. This song is particularly moving, as most of it is sung as if she is reading poetry while the band is there to simply match the beat of her words. As a result, every line is clear and powerful. The strength of the lyrics contrasts with the high and pure voice in the singing so that the song does not become overwhelming.

Another great song is "We Were Just Boys and Girls." This is the last song on the CD, and it sounds like a lullaby. It's fitting as the closing piece; Starr sings "Before we were stained / we were just boys ... and girls." Starr ex-

plores the past with all its hardships, but now that she has sung of her pain, she can finally move on and go to sleep.

Other notable songs are "Pre-tending" and "Big Enough." Both display the intensity of her vocals, and the power of her lyrics. In fact, "Big Enough" would be nearly perfect except that she switches from an emotional piece to a rock solo — the rock part isn't bad, but it doesn't fit with the song. In addition, "Beautiful in Los Angeles" and "No Man's Land" prove that she can also create songs with faster, pop tempos.

While all of these songs have emotive lyrics, this is not a record full of sappy ballads. Instead, Starr appears to be commenting on her past so that she can move forward unhindered. Just as you will feel better for having cried with the song, she has freed herself from the past hurt. Moreover, her voice is capable

of carrying a note long enough that she does not need to restrict her lyrics to short couplets, but instead can express her feelings with more complex and descriptive lyrics.

Another aspect of the CD that adds to its appeal is the editing and sound mixing. Not only are the songs ordered perfectly to tell Starr's story, they also have a raw quality not often heard in records today. Some notes

may not be perfect, but they convey an intensity that would severely reduce the quality of the CD if removed. In addition, you get the feeling that nothing has been synthesized, and that if you saw her live, she would sing at the same level as she does on the record.

This CD is a great one that will withstand the test of time. I had never heard of Starr before writing this review, but I am so glad I have found her. This is a CD that I will certainly listen to many times over.

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*The strength of the lyrics contrasts with the high and pure voice in the singing so that the song does not become overwhelming.*

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THEATER REVIEW

# Felix for President!

*‘Felutopia’ is Food for Thought, Brings Farming to the People*

**By Robert Morrison**  
*Felutopia*  
*The Coalition Against Racist Propaganda and Other Crimes Perpetrated by the White Man*  
*Dramashop*  
*April 27-29, 2006*  
*Kresge Rehearsal Room A*

For an intimate, simple production, Felutopia was elegant and thought provoking. Four actors set up an open farm-based community, which, in order to deal with population pressures and the difficulty of running a government, promotes a simple farmer, Felix, to president. He runs things as

best he can, while maintaining an uncorrupted farmer’s heart, but gets trapped by the presidency more and more, until he is finally set up as a scapegoat by those around him. As a production, it is beautifully crafted. Susan B. Wilson ’08 stage manages, house manages, and runs the lights and sound. Adam A. Miller ’06, the director, gives the audience plenty of food for thought, basing the action and mood on universal concepts without referring to specific historical events. For example, the characters have town meetings to decide things, and vote left or right (rather than yea or nay). Daniel B. Chonde ’07 costumes the opening

farmers in colorful Hawaiian prints that complement their accepting, cheerful outlook on life. Then, as the characters change their station and role in society, their costumes change to match. The set is just a few chairs, with the actors miming simple actions and performing motions choreographed to represent more complex actions. The cast is tight, and works well together to bring across abstract concepts. Chonde’s Felix is spontaneous and original, still loving the simple farming life even in a position of authority. Adam C. Love ’07 plays Don, a charming advisor to Felix, even as the advice he gives becomes more and more motivated by selfishness. Diane, played by Helen F. McCreery ’06, feels the in-

equality of the new society most keenly, and responds almost vindictively. Adam Miller’s Dave is the newcomer to this society; he is warmly accepted initially, but then abandoned as the only farmer left from the original enclave. Felutopia will be performed again over Graduation Weekend, then it will be taken on tour to the United Kingdom. This show should travel well with its spare set and minimal but effective use of props, and costumes. Because its strong concept base can incorporate new interpretations as it is performed for different audiences, Felutopia should continue to evolve and be just as thought-provoking and enjoyable in England as it was here.

FILM REVIEW

# Bar Mitzvah Movie Can’t ‘Keep Up’

*Awful Acting, Awful Plot, Awful Jokes Make for a Truly Horrible Film*

**By Yong-Yi Zhu**  
*STAFF WRITER*  
*Keeping Up with the Steins*  
*Directed by Scott Marshall*  
*Written by Mark Zakarin*  
*Starring Jeremy Piven, Jami Gertz, Doris Roberts*  
*Rated PG-13*  
*Opens Today*

Mazel tov” would not be an appropriate way to toast “Keeping Up With the Steins”; “oy vey” would be much more appropriate. This is a comedy with only a few funny jokes and many unnatural, awkward scenes. At some points it tries too hard to be funny or outrageous, and only manages to be corny or dumb. Sure, it had a few redeeming moments, but the fact that none of them come to mind right now reveals exactly how memorable the movie really is. The film is about a boy, Benjamin Fiedler (Daryl Sabara), who is not completely pre-

pared to become a man, yet is trying desperately to get ready for his bar mitzvah. What’s worse is that his parents are trying to throw him the biggest bar mitzvah party in the history of bar mitzvah parties; they want to top the one that their friends, the Steins, threw their son Zachary (Carter Jenkins). Ben’s dad, Adam Fiedler (Jeremy Piven), used to work with Zach’s dad, Arnie Stein (Larry Miller), until Arnie stole Adam’s clients and started an agency firm of his own. Adam wants revenge of sorts by upstaging his old colleague and throwing his own son a better bar mitzvah party. That may sound easy to do until you realize that Zach’s bar mitzvah was held aboard a cruise ship with a Titanic theme, almost as though Zach were a movie star himself. Now the Fiedlers are wracking their brains to think of a way to beat the Steins. But while Adam and his wife, Joanne (Jami Gertz), tackle the guest list, the venue location and the seating chart, Ben is simply trying to understand what it means to go through a bar mitzvah.

He does not feel as though he is ready to be a man. Instead of delving deeper into his Hebrew studies or better understanding his life, Ben’s plan is to invite his paternal grandfather Irwin (Garry Marshall) who left Ben’s grandmother (Doris Roberts) more than twenty years ago. He changes the date on the invite so that his grandfather will arrive two weeks early and divert his parents’ attention from the bar mitzvah party. Adam hates his father for abandoning the family, and after twenty years, he is still as resentful as ever. It does not help that Irwin brings both his trailer home and his young girlfriend to Adam’s fancy Brentwood home. From this difficult experience, every person in the family manages to learn a little more about themselves and how they should behave. Perhaps some of the worst moments in the film are the ones with Roberts and Marshall. They are supposed to be ex-husband and wife, but they still have the tenderness of a loving couple that is happily married. Roberts is extremely awkward in the film; her performance is

almost artificial. Marshall, on the other hand, is simply over the top. He lives in a trailer home by choice, he swims naked in Adam’s jacuzzi, and he carries a cane with a sword sheathed within. Piven and Gertz might be the two positives to take away from the film, but only because they play normal characters. They are the worried parents, obsessed with making their kid look better than another family’s kid. Piven is almost childlike in his role as the father, but he has to be — his character’s own father is in town. Even Gertz, however, appears unrealistic at times; at first, she is an overbearing mother flustered about the bar mitzvah, but then she turns into a comforting mother who consoles Benjamin about his problems. After all the criticism, this movie may be good for one thing: reminding the studios that they are capable of creating a completely awful film. Let’s just hope that summer blockbusters — sequels and remakes though they may be — will have higher standards and be slightly more entertaining.

# ON THE SCREEN

— BY THE TECH ARTS STAFF —

★★★★: Inspired brilliance  
★★★: Solid filmmaking  
★★: Mild entertainment  
★: Embarrassing dreck

★★★★ **American Dreamz**  
This is one of the few comedies in recent years that doesn’t give away its funniest moments in the previews. What makes this film so enjoyable is the amazing cast, which includes Dennis Quaid, Hugh Grant, Willem Dafoe, and Mandy Moore. It would be incomplete, though, without the plethora of minor characters and impressive unknowns, like Sam Golzari and Tony Yalda. “American Dreamz” is delightfully satirical; the writers didn’t hold back. Pretty much everyone and everything is a target: Bush and his administration, Britney Spears, Ryan Seacrest, the entertainment industry, the army, immigrants, terrorists, and gay stereotypes. (Alice Macdonald)

★★½ **Ice Age: The Meltdown**  
This sequel begins where “Ice Age,” the first film, left off; the animals have found a warmer paradise and discovered that the ice age is coming to an end. More appealing to a younger audience, “Meltdown” has a straightforward plot — and unlike recent animated features that dabble in pop culture — doesn’t require viewers to be hip to get a good laugh. Despite the second-class graphics and predictable story, the movie is filled with creative humor, and it accomplishes one goal with ease: entertainment. (Hendrata Dharmawan)

★★★ **Inside Man**  
Think of “Inside Man” as a Da Vinci Code-esque film, with a huge mystery hidden behind small clues revealed every so often. The film draws us in right from the get-go, and it doesn’t release us until the final secret is unveiled. Clive Owen excels as a calm and collected bank robber; he gives the impression that his character is conducting a well-rehearsed orchestra instead of pulling off a heist. Jodie Foster’s character, on the other hand, is superfluous, and Denzel Washington is also disappointing. The plot and the idea behind the movie, though, are addictive — this may

be not just the perfect robbery, but the perfect thriller as well. (Yong-yi Zhu)

★★★½ **Lucky Number Slevin**  
A boss, a rabbi, a man in a purple-flowered towel, a cop, a perky neighbor, an assassin, and a missing friend: sounds like a recipe for total disaster. Somehow, though, this group of misfits comes together in one of the most brilliant films of the year. Director Paul McGuigan pieces together the stories of all these characters to make a disorienting dark comedy about a man who just happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time — all the time. In a strong male cast, Lucy Liu steals the show, and the superb acting is crucial; it makes this film come out just right. (Yong-yi Zhu)

★★½ **The Notorious Bettie Page**  
Gretchen Mol plays Bettie Page, one of the most famous pinup models of the 1950s, who transformed from an innocent Tennessee girl into the queen of bondage. In addition to presenting her blossoming career, the movie shows the trials and tribulations Bettie endured as a woman with so much sex appeal. The acting was relatively weak, and some of the scenes came out of nowhere and do not add to the movie, but the makeup and cinematography do a convincing and authentic job of identifying the decade. (Yong-yi Zhu)

★★★★ **Thank You for Smoking**  
This film is absolutely brilliant in making everything wrong seem right, everything disturbing seem funny, and everything pointless seem meaningful. Not until the end of the film did I realize that there was no plot — just one laugh-out-loud scene after another in the life of evil tobacco spokesman Nick Naylor (Aaron Eckhart). The list of talented performances is endless; from the amazingly creative opening credits to the last words, every part is selected with such care that the resulting creation is a contemporary work of art. (Yong-yi Zhu)

★★★★ **Water**  
“Water” is the latest installment in Deepa Mehta’s critically acclaimed elements series,

and it is no ordinary film. It explores the politics and morality of religion, and tells the story of three widows and how the Indian Independence movement affects their lives irrevocably — making them question the set of beliefs on which their existence rests. The movie was

breathhtaking; though films themselves can’t change the world, Mehta hopes to begin the dialogue that will lead to that change. (Parama Pal)

Compiled by Nivair H. Gabriel

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Spring Concert

2006



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Armenian Dances  
**Cecile Chaminade**  
Concertino For Flute Solo  
**Johan de Meij**  
Hobbits

**Sergey Prokofiev**  
March Op. 99  
**Norman Dello Joio**  
Fantasies on a Theme by Haydn  
**Stephen Melillo**  
Musashi

Director/Conductor:  
Thomas Reynolds



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# Dance Troupe Debuts ‘Guilty Pleasures’

MIT Dance Troupe’s “Guilty Pleasures” opened in Little Kresge on yesterday and will run until Sunday.

Clockwise from left:

Jorge L. Alvarado '06 tangos with Karima Robert Nigmatulina G to “Roxanne,” inspired by the movie Moulin Rouge.

Ray “Raytomic Bomb” Y. Cheng '09 breakdances in “Getting Krump is My Anti-Drug,” choreographed by Stephen A. Steger '08.

Hubert “Afrodezeak” L. Roberts '06 pumps it in “Getting Krump is My Anti-Drug.”

“Comedic Dreams,” choreographed by Augusta K. Dibbell '07.

Photography by Christina Kang.





# Police Log

The following incidents were reported to the Cambridge or MIT Police between April 26 and May 4. This summary does not include incidents such as suspicious activity, false alarms, general service calls, or medical shuttles.

- April 23:** Student Center (84 Mass Ave.), 6:45 p.m., Miguel Morales, 24, homeless, arrested on a warrant and resisting arrest.
- April 24:** Bldg. E39 (264 Main St.), 4:00 p.m., theft of cash; 4:35 p.m., suspicious activity; 5:45 p.m., attempted breaking into room.
- April 26:** PLP (450 Beacon St.), 3:30 a.m., complaint about noise on rooftop., Bldg. 36 (50 Vassar St., Fl. 3), 7:45 a.m., Ms. Kelly Jones, homeless, arrested on an outstanding warrant. Stata Center (32 Vassar St.), 4:00 p.m., call about protesters disturbing a speech.
- April 27:** Bldg. 42 (59 Vassar St.), 8:30 a.m., sighting of smoke; fire on room caused by welder's spark.
- April 28:** NW16 (167 Albany St.), 12:30 p.m., breaking and entering; building material stolen.
- March 4:** E53 (30 Wadsworth St.), 8:30 a.m., bicycle stolen.
- May 5:** Senior House (70 Amherst St.), 11:50 p.m., Daniel Jacobs, 14 Hawthorn St., after being observed entering and exiting the building was arrested for trespassing (second offense) and possession of class "C" controlled substance. According to <http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/94c-31.htm>, Class C controlled substances include hallucinogens, CNS depressants, and low-strength prescription narcotics such as codeine.

— Compiled by Marjan Rafat with assistance from other members of the MIT Crime Club.

**Solution to Crossword**  
from page 7

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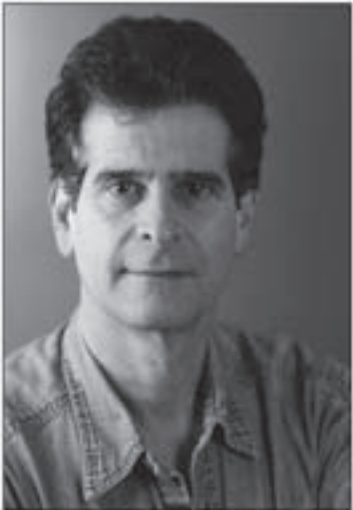
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# Science Core, HASS Requirement Changes Proposed

GIRs, from Page 1

development. (See <http://web.mit.edu/darbeloff/current.htm> for more details.)

New core’s goal is ‘flexibility’

The proposed science-math-engineering core aims to offer students some additional flexibility by allowing them to pick one subject out of several from five of six categories, rather than stipulating specific requirements.

Some students at Wednesday’s forum worried that in the proposed model, their choice of subjects as freshmen would restrict their opportunities as upperclassmen, while others feared that the core might lose cohesiveness.

Flexibility can sometimes indicate an attitude of “we don’t know what you should be learning,” said physics major Michelle Zimmermann ’07.

“Flexibility sounds good, but by increasing flexibility in the core, you may actually be decreasing flexibility in the long-run,” said Jessica H. Lowell ’07, a Brain and Cognitive Sciences major who said she needed until midway through her sophomore year to select her major. “I’m glad that I had the foundational classes in chemistry, physics, and biology, and math,” she said, concluding that “there’s a reason at a tech school for a science core to be more rigid.” Lowell is also the outgoing vice president of the Undergraduate Association.

“There will be a tightening of the possibilities for students,” Silbey acknowledged, especially in departments requiring many of the GIR subjects, but he said the trade-off was a worthwhile one.

The proposed project-based GIR, which Silbey said might resemble current subjects like 12.000 (Solving Complex Problems and 16.00 (Introduction to Aerospace and Design), drew praise.

The new option would “get the manus back into mens et manus,” MIT’s motto, said Edward J. Moriarty ’76, a technical instructor at the Edgerton Center, which houses a student machine shop.

Freshman HASS classes proposed

The proposed freshman common experience HASS classes, which freshmen would take in one of their first two terms, are intended to raise the prominence and importance of HASS subjects and give students a common experience that allows them to converse about their humanities classes, as well as their core science and engineering

classes. “We want to have a freshman experience in HASS that will be full of energy and concentrate on big ideas and fundamental knowledge,” said Silbey.

To signify the importance of HASS, the classes would be offered in a time block during which no other freshmen classes could be held, a change Silbey deemed a “radical recommendation,” that would also eliminate scheduling constraints that might otherwise affect selection of HASS classes.

All too often, advisors tell their freshmen advisees only to “find yourself a Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences subject on this list of 75 that you’ll enjoy and that fits into your schedule,” Silbey said.

With the addition of the freshman experience subject, the current three-subject HASS distribution requirement (which would drop the

name HASS-D), would be reduced to “foundational” subjects from two of three categories: Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. A three to four-subject HASS concentration would remain a requirement, which Silbey said would be better-defined and more demanding than at present.

The Communication Intensive requirement for HASS classes will remain, said Fitzgerald, and the freshman experience subject would serve as one of two required CI-H subjects.

Few students jumped to support the common experience subjects. Lowell called the idea “patronizing” and “antithetical to the idea that MIT students should be allowed to decide these things for themselves.”

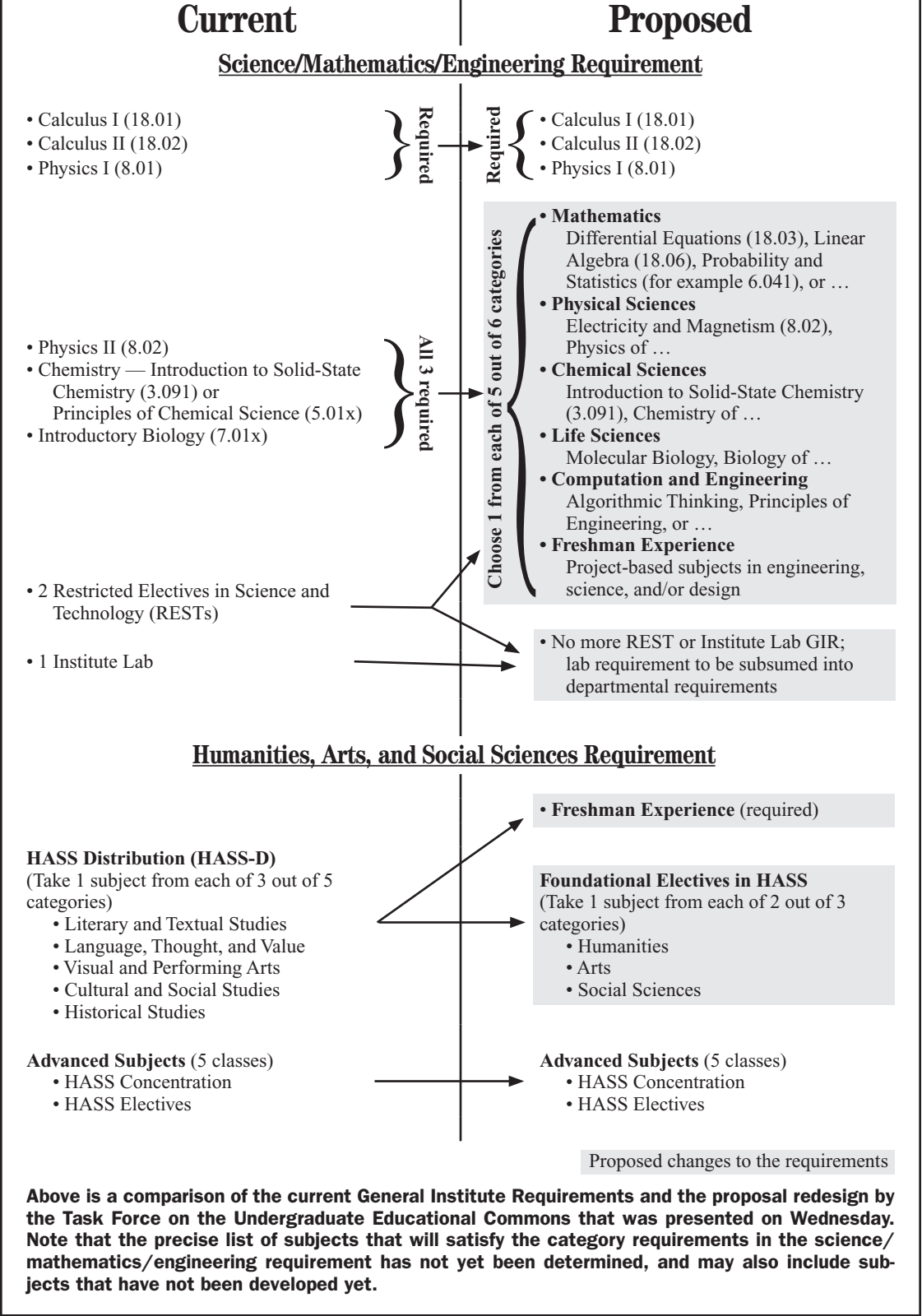
Sarah C. Hopp ’08, a double major in Courses VII and IX, worried that restricting HASS subjects in the freshman year might put students who need specific HASS classes for their majors at a disadvantage.

“It is a little bit controversial to try to squish down to 16 [Freshmen Experience] classes the huge variety of [HASS] classes that incoming freshman now have,” said Deborah K. Fitzgerald, chair of the subcommittee that helped construct the new HASS requirement. Freshman feel overwhelmed or intimidated by the current choice of over 100 HASS classes that “all look pretty much the same,” she said. Reducing the number of open classes provides a way to “offer some guidance to students.”

Study abroad to be encouraged

In addition to the changes to the GIRs, the committee is also

## The General Institute Requirements



likely to make more general recommendations about undergraduate education at the Institute, Silbey said. Among these would be pushing to make international experiences such as study abroad easier, improving advising and mentoring, and recommending the replacement

of double degrees with double majors, which would have fewer unit requirements.

Currently, “departments are not very encouraging” of study abroad programs, leading some to fear that “by leaving the Institute, they may fall behind,” said Christopher A.

Suarez ’06, a student serving on the committee.

Studying abroad can be a “really eye-opening and maybe life-changing” experience, Silbey said. “Why would we not give our students that opportunity if we can figure out how to do it keeping the rigor of the MIT undergraduate education?”

A few questioned the new emphasis on international experiences, however. “I applied to MIT because I wanted an MIT education, not because I wanted to be in Europe,” Zimmermann said, while Lowell questioned the potential impact an exodus of undergraduates studying abroad might have on communities of students.

The committee also hopes to address the quality of undergraduate advising, which has long been a concern at the Institute and was the subject of a faculty committee report last year. Advising “needs to be fixed, improved,” according to Silbey.

“We are really concerned that there’s been a culture at MIT where advising is a rubber stamp,” Suarez said.

What tweaks these recommendations may undergo before they are finalized this fall, and whether the faculty will approve them, remains to be seen. Between now and then, faculty and students on the task force will solicit input by e-mail and discussion forums. The task force members can be reached by e-mail at [edcommons@mit.edu](mailto:edcommons@mit.edu)

## A Selected History of the GIRs

The newly proposed modifications to the General Institute Requirements stress flexibility and innovative project-oriented experiences.

But these guiding motivations are far from new — previous iterations of revisions to the core curriculum have espoused similar goals, and even suggested similar requirements.

The end result is that over the past 50 years, the Institute has moved from a strict curriculum where freshmen and sophomores took nearly identical classes to one where academic freedom and broadness have become the valued commodity.

Changes to the Science Core

¶ **1964:** The science requirements are cut in half, with the faculty voting to replace four physics subjects (8.01–8.04) with two, four mathematics subjects (18.01–18.04) with two, and two chemistry subjects (5.01–5.02) with one, in the name of academic flexibility.

A laboratory subject, aimed at emphasizing projects rather than routine experiments, becomes a requirement. Rounding out the new core is a three-subject science distribution requirement.

The new requirements take effect starting with the Class of 1969.

¶ **1981:** A biology requirement should be a

“serious consideration,” according to a report by the Committee on Educational Policy, which also suggests the “possibility of a required subject in computation.”

The same committee expresses doubt that the science requirement then in place gives students enough breadth, and calls the laboratory requirement “unsatisfactory.”

¶ **1991:** The faculty approves a biology Institute requirement. With that addition, the science distribution requirement is cut from three subjects to two, which are renamed Restricted Electives in Science and Technology.

Changes to the HASS Core

¶ **1949:** A committee reports an overhaul of undergraduate education, with more emphasis on humanities, as well as on fundamental principles instead of detailed context.

The commission proposes replacing the four-year program in humanities with strong emphasis on history, English, and economics.

In its place, they suggest a four-year humanities program with a two-year core curriculum for freshmen and sophomores followed by elective sequences in the junior and senior years. The core is designed to emphasize Western civilization and contemporary American heritage.

The new core goes into effect in the fall of 1951.

¶ **1950:** A direct result of the 1949 Lewis Commission report, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences is created.

¶ **1974:** The humanities core is scrapped by the faculty in favor of a distribution/concentration model that fully goes into effect for the Class of 1978.

The distribution requires three subjects in three different fields, and a three- to four-subject concentration also becomes required. Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences Harold Hanham calls it “a proposal which is flexible enough to allow us to move forward.”

¶ **1986:** A committee evaluating the HASS requirement proposes a four-subject distribution requirement, with one subject in each of four categories. This proposal was not adopted.

¶ **1987:** The HUM-D distribution created the decade before is replaced by the current HASS-D requirement, requiring students to take three subjects in five categories, going into effect for the Class of 1992. An alternative proposal to require one subject each in humanities and social science and a third in any HASS subject was voted down.

—Kelley Rivoire



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Officers for the 2006-2007 Undergraduate Association were selected at Monday night's meeting of the UA Senate. The UA Senate Chair, Vice-Chair, and Senate Representatives to Financial Board and Executive Committee were elected by the Senate. All the other officers were nominated by UA President-elect Andrew Lukmann and approved by the Senate.

\*Shreyes Seshasai is *The Tech's* Technology Director.

# Funding For Science Research Priority for DOE, Says Bodman

Bodman, from Page 1

as waste.

These advanced reactors produce more electricity and less nuclear waste than current technology. The GNEP arrangement “carries the potential to allow poorer nations to leapfrog over some of the dirtiest ... fossil fuel-based technologies,” he said.

GNEP is set to begin in fiscal year 2007, Bodman said, pending Congress’s approval of an initial \$250 million of funding.

By 2026, cellulosic ethanol could account for as much as a quarter of America’s transportation fuels usage. While most ethanol is currently formed from corn, cellulosic ethanol is derived from feedstocks such as wood chips, prairie switchgrass, or the leftover leaves and stalks of corn plants, all of which are more abundant than corn grain.

Today, ethanol comprises less than 5 percent of U.S. fuel use, partially because this year’s national ethanol production — at 5.6 billion gallons — comes from corn. Last year, about 14 percent of the nation’s corn crop went into ethanol, Bodman said, but reliance on corn could lead to economic disturbance of food markets.

Nuclear energy and cellulosic ethanol highlight the short-term focus that Bodman is bringing to the Department of Energy. In response to a question on the long-term potential of nuclear fusion, for example, as an energy source, Bodman said that he was trying to foster a “let’s get some things done” attitude at the department, which contrasted with the abundance of research projects that “seemed to have no end” in the department

when he took office in 2005.

### Basic research a priority

Bodman also spoke passionately about the need for basic science and research, and the DOE’s commitment to funding basic research, particularly in the physical sciences. “While recent advances in biology, genetics, and medicine have been nothing short of outstanding ... it is a risky business in my view to fund one area of study at the possible expense of others.”

Bodman cited the ongoing construction of a coherent x-ray light source at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, an increased investment in microbial research, and the creation of five nanoscale science research centers at DOE labs around the country as examples of the department’s commitment to basic science.

Also touted by the Secretary of Energy were several new initiatives on energy from the Bush administration. One, the American Competitiveness Initiative—a “watershed for American science and engineering,” would fund not only breakthroughs in research, but also the education of future scientists and engineers at the elementary and high school levels, he said.

### Increased funding is crucial

Bodman also repeatedly and candidly acknowledged the political realities he faces in Washington. Several times he mentioned that his department’s overall budget has been flat and openly stated that certain energy policies that are widely favored by analysts, such as raising national fuel taxes, are simply politically untenable.

The President has committed to doubling the budget of the DOE’s Office of Science over the next 10

years, Bodman said, as part of Bush’s Advanced Energy Initiative. For fiscal year 2007, this office’s budget would expand 14 percent, from \$3.6 billion to \$4.1 billion, he said. These expanded funds could support 2,600 new energy researchers in 2007.

Bodman paralleled the national security, public health, and competitiveness challenges of today to the times of his youth. “I was a product of the Sputnik generation,” which was a “time of fear,” that led to not only the space race but a massive increase National Science Foundation funding, he said. Sputnik and fear of Russian dominance led America to recognize that its economic preeminence required substantial and sustained investment in science and technology.

That investment must continue today, said Bodman, saying that “this government is committed to holding up our end of the bargain” to scientists and engineers.

Bodman singled out MIT at several points in his lecture. He congratulated the Institute on its recent selection to participate in the DOE’s Solar Decathlon, which involves the design and construction of solar-powered, energy-efficient houses on the Mall in Washington, DC.

He also reflected fondly on his time in Cambridge and MIT, saying that his experiences taught him not only chemical engineering or problem solving, but also “how to be in the world.”

Perhaps it was these larger lessons that inspired the best punchline of the secretary’s talk: after strongly defending President Bush’s decision not to sign the Kyoto protocol, he smiled and added, “By the way, I don’t agree with the President on everything, but if I don’t, you won’t hear about it from me.”

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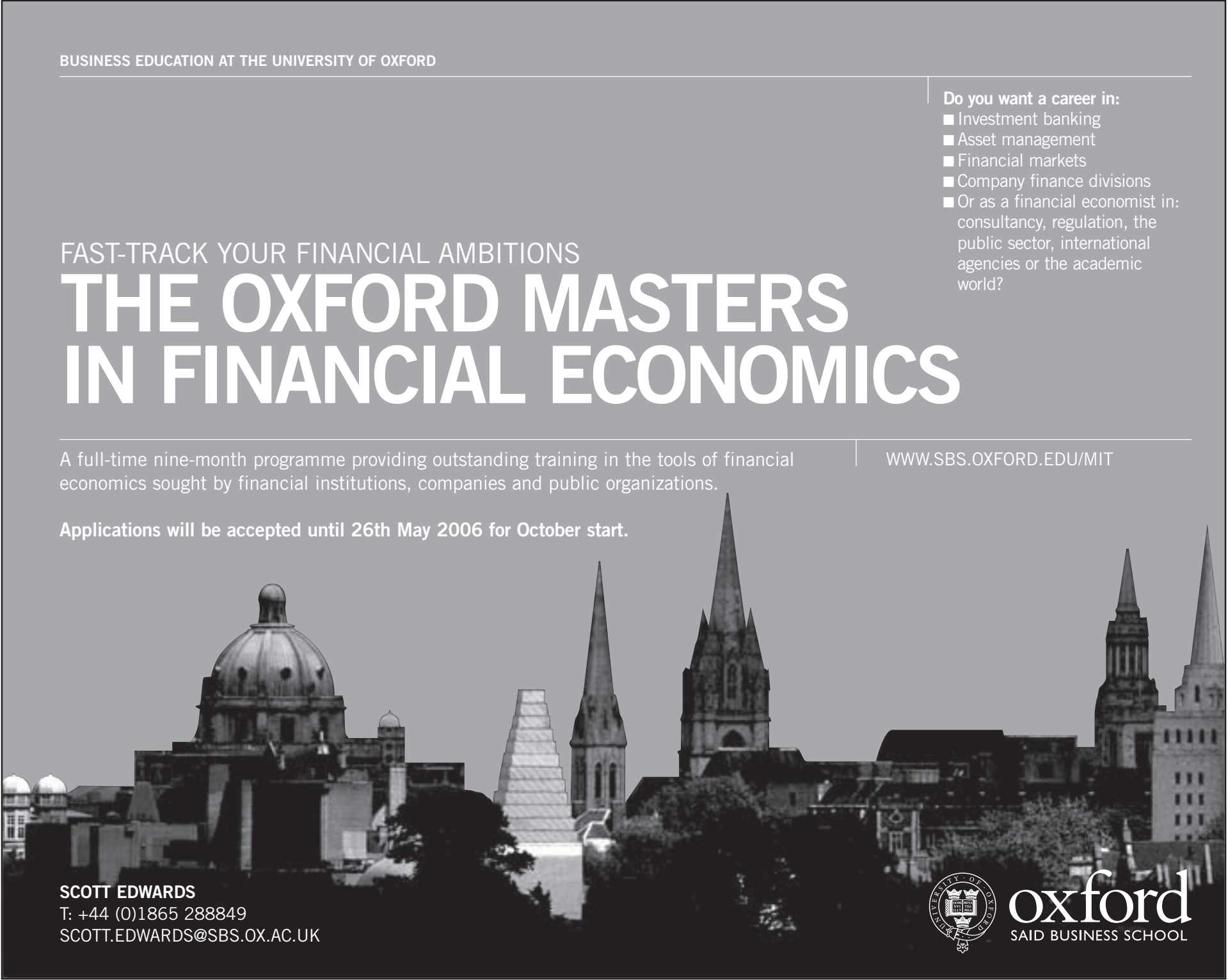
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# MIT's First Study Abroad Head Plans to Increase Participation

By Daniela Cako  
STAFF REPORTER

As many MIT sophomores prepare to study next year in Cambridge, England, they might be interacting with Malgorzata Radziszewska-Hedderick, MIT's first assistant dean for the study abroad program.

Both Senior Associate Dean Margaret S. Enders and Radziszewska-Hedderick agree that there needs to be more publicizing of the various study abroad options that are available to students. Radziszewska-Hedderick said that she plans to inform students about studying abroad earlier, during their freshman year.

Holly C. Greenberg '08, a Course II student who is going to Cambridge through the Cambridge-MIT Exchange program, said that two drawbacks of the program are its lack of credit and research opportunities. "It will not get me ahead neither will it leave me behind" she said, describing the academia curriculum.

Enders confirmed the former — the major issue with the current

study abroad programs is transferring credits, she said. Currently there are various abroad programs that fit with the curriculum requirements of different MIT departments, but not all programs offer classes that are accepted for credit by every department.

For example, Courses XIII, XIV, and XVIII accept classes taken as part of the CME program, and most students receive credit for classes taken in the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. Course X accepts classes taken by students in a program in Madrid which was started this year.

Radziszewska-Hedderick's primary goal is to help students who want to go abroad by preparing them early and strategizing with them on what classes they should take. She said that she has also had conversations with different departments this term, and is encouraging them to promote and support the possibility of studying abroad.

She said she will be holding monthly information sessions for students about educational opportunities overseas and plans to redesign

the study abroad office's Web site by making it more dynamic and informative.

The search for the new assistant dean took the entire fall semester, Enders said.

Radziszewska-Hedderick was hired at the beginning of the spring semester from a pool of 130 applicants. She was previously involved in the MIT-Japan Program and commented, "I find [MIT] a very welcoming environment and especially supportive from everyone."

Along with the hiring of Radziszewska-Hedderick in January, the study abroad office received its own office space in 26-163. However, the space is not student-friendly and will hopefully only be temporary, Enders said.

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RICARDO RAMIREZ—THE TECH

John Guidara, Executive Director of the Metro Boston Emergency Medical Services Council, hands HeartSafe Community signs to Jonathan Liu '08 (rear, obscured) and Rachel L. Williams '07 (foreground) at the dedication ceremony. MIT is the first-ever college campus to receive the HeartSafe Community designation, with hundreds of students currently trained to use automatic external defibrillators installed throughout campus.

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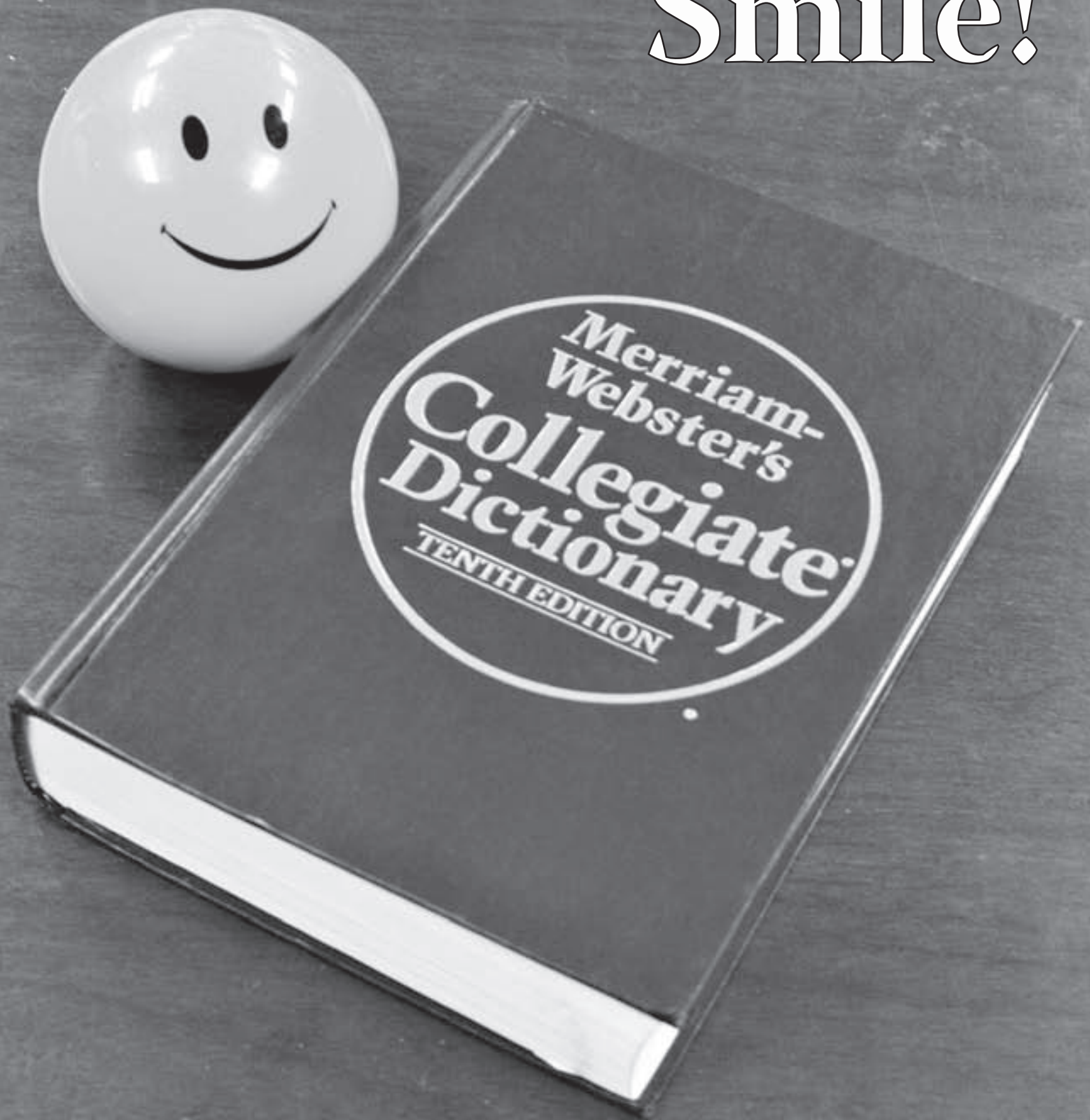
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2. publishing photos in *The Tech* while enjoying high-end photographic equipment, exclusive developing facilities, free dinners, and good company

*photo@the-tech.mit.edu*



# Spring Flowers



Top left: A daffodil brightens up the corner of Hampshire and Clark Street in Cambridge.  
Above: Yellow tulips blossom at the Hatch Shell.  
Left: A purple hyacinth stands out in a flower bed in Cambridge.  
Below: Runners pass by magnolia blossoms lining the Esplanade along the Charles River.  
*Photography by Xanat Flores*





SPORTS

NBA Playoffs Fun This Year Thanks to Spurs, Pistons

By Travis Johnson  
SPORTS EDITOR

For the first time in years, I'm really excited about the NBA playoffs.

I know the players take three steps down the lane, don't play defense, and only care about their paychecks. But I'm hooked this year, and I think I know why: for the first time since the Celtics and Lakers of the 80's, there is a dominant team in each conference, the San Antonio Spurs and the Detroit Pistons. Both teams are number one seeds and can make the finals winning only at home, where they have the best two records in the league and looked dominant in their opening round series.

What about the Dallas Mavericks, you say? I think San Antonio is still the favorite thanks to their playoff

experience and depth, but an upset is certainly possible.

Already you can see one reason dominant teams are a good thing: it means you can have upsets. If San Antonio weren't the favorite, Dallas' great first round victories and game two win over the Spurs would just be an example of the blue uniformed team from Texas looking better than the black uniformed one. But now it's an upset in the making, and college basketball's March Madness has proven how fun upsets can be.

The rivalry between the Spurs and Pistons also gives otherwise uninteresting playoff games a context that makes them more enjoyable. Watching the Spurs beat Sacramento by 34 in the first game of their first round series was still interesting because it was a message to the Pistons. The current quarterfinal series between the Heat and the Nets, the least entertain-

ing series of the second round, is still fun to watch in the hope that someone will emerge to challenge Detroit.

While rooting for underdogs like Dallas and the Cleveland Cavaliers, I still hope they lose in the end so we can have another Pistons-Spurs final series. Last year the Finals between them went to game seven, the first such game in the Finals since 1994. Watching the Lakers beat up on the Nets or Sixers in previous Finals was fun, but only if you live in Los Angeles. The rest of us want every game to be close, and we have a good chance of that in 2006 if it's the Spurs and Pistons.

Anyone who complains about how selfish NBA players are should be spewing praise for San Antonio and Detroit. Both teams succeed by distributing the ball and playing as a team. They each have four starters averaging 10 or more points a game, and the only player on either team

to average more than 20 is Richard Hamilton of the Pistons at 20.1.

Detroit has gotten a lot more fun to watch under new coach Flip Saunders. Their offense has become much more aggressive, resulting in a 3.5 points per game increase in scoring and a noticeable change in their style. So far in the playoffs, they are second in scoring with 106.6 points per game.

For their part, San Antonio has added Michael Finley to an already potent lineup. Along with Brent Barry, he gives stars Manu Ginobili, Tony Parker, and Tim Duncan two great shooters to kick to. They aren't that far behind the Pistons in playoff scoring, sitting at third with 102.4 points per game.

The league as a whole is getting more watchable every year thanks to teams like the Phoenix Suns and Dallas. Phoenix is by far the most

entertaining team in the league with their strategy of fast breaking, shooting in 7 seconds, and going for 130 points. Matched in the first round against a surging Lakers team with a contrasting style and clutch Kobe Bryant, their games were the best I've seen in the NBA.

Dallas fast breaks too, but I swear their owner Mark Cuban is the real reason they are so fun to watch. He suffers more after a loss and glows more after a win than anyone on the team, and has invested a lot in making the American Airlines Center a great place to watch a game in person or on TV.

So what's my prediction for the rest of the playoffs? San Antonio squeaks past Dallas and easily beats Phoenix but loses in 7 to Detroit, which obliterates the Eastern Conference and uses the extra rest and home court to reclaim the title.

Column

down the lane, don't play defense, and

only care about their paychecks. But I'm hooked this year, and I think I know why: for the first time since the Celtics and Lakers of the 80's, there is a dominant team in each conference, the San Antonio Spurs and the Detroit Pistons. Both teams are number one seeds and can make the finals winning only at home, where they have the best two records in the league and looked dominant in their opening round series.

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